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THE

CALUMNIES

UPON THE

Primitive Christians

Accounted for.

OR, AN

ENQUIRY

Into the

Grounds, and Causes of the Charge of Incest, Infanticide, Atheism, Onolatria, or Ass-Worship, Sedition, *&c.* laid against the Christians, in the three first Centuries.

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TO

The Right Reverend Father in God

EDMUND

Lord Biſhop of

LONDON,

This Attempt to account for the Calumnies upon the Primitive Chriſtians

Is humbly offer'd,

By

His LORDSHIP'S

Dutiful and Obedient Servant,

ROB. TURNER.

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THE INTRODUCTION.

IN the following sheets, I have endeavour'd to give some account, of the rise and progress, the grounds and occasions, of those various calumnies upon the Primitive Christians. An attempt of this nature must, I am sensible, be very imperfect, though manag'd by a learned hand, and with the utmost dexterity, and care: because, though the learned Apologists have, with irresistible reasoning, eternally silenc'd all those cavils, and exceptions against the first Christians; yet they do not always mention the causes, that gave birth to those calumnies. Being therefore frequently destitute of authorities, I am oblig'd to have recourse to conjecture, and probability.

That the best of men shou'd be charg'd with the foulest of crimes, and the most innocent behaviour give the greatest offence. That professing the Christian religion, the best natur'd, and peace-

able Inſtitution, the world was ever acquainted with, ſhou'd expoſe men to contempt, and ridicule, and to all the barbarous outrages, that helliſh cruelty cou'd invent, is ſomething very ſurprizing. And it will add to the wonder when we obſerve, for how long a time, thoſe excellent Chriſtians labour'd under thoſe ſcandalous imputations. When innocence is now a days injur'd, and defam'd, it generally recovers its reputation, and eſteem in a ſhort time. An evil report ſeldom laſts long, unleſs it has ſome foundation, either in fact, or probability. But it was the hard fate of the Primitive Chriſtians, for a great many Years together, to be charg'd with crimes, that their enemies only were guilty of. The calumnies ſeem to have commenc'd with Chriſtianity it ſelf, and to have continu'd above two hundred Years.

Tertullian mentions the charge of Inceſt and Infanticide, as of a long ſtanding (*a*); and juſtly reproves the infidels, for bringing in ſo long a time, no better evidence than common Fame.

(*a*) Quod aliud negotium patitur Chriſtianus, niſi ſuæ ſectæ? quam incæſtam, quam crudelem, tanto tempore nemo probavit. ad ſcapulam *cap.* 4. Merito igitur Fama tamdiu ſola conſcia eſt ſcelerum Chriſtianorum. Hanc indicem adverſus nos profertis, quæ quod aliquando jactavit, tantoque Spatio in Opinionem corroboravit, uſque adhuc probare non valuit. *Apol. cap.* 8.

Juſtin

Justin Martyr is the first, that expresly tells us, the Christians were charg'd with those crimes, in an Apology presented to the Emperor *Antoninus Pius*, in behalf of the persecuted Christians, *A. D.* 139, or 140. 'Tis said, I own, in the same Apology, that it was then 150 years since the Birth of our Saviour: But this must be a mistake of the transcriber (*b*). For *Antoninus*'s Edict in favour of the Christians, was occasion'd by *Justin*'s Apology; and by the intercession of some Christians in *Asia*. The Edict was therefore posterior in point of time, to *Justin*'s Apology: And since the Edict bears date (*c*), in the third Consulate of *Antoninus*, *A. D.* 140, the Apology must be written, at the lowest, in the same year. But those calumnies prevail'd before *Justin* was a Christian; for he tells us (*d*), whilst he was a Philosopher of *Plato*'s school, he us'd to wonder, how it came to pass, that the Christians shou'd be accus'd of indulging themselves in all manner of abominable, and unlawful pleasures, and yet at the same time suffer, with the utmost chearfulness, and intrepidity, the most inhuman tortures, and even death it self; by which they were effectually depriv'd of all temporal pleasures, and enjoyments.

(*b*) Vide *Cav. Hist. Lit. de Justin. Mart.*
(*c*) Vide *Just. Apol.* 1. *p.* 135. *Grab. Edit.*
(*d*) *Apol.* 2. *cap.* 12. *Grab. Edit.*

The famous Apologies of *Quadratus*, and *Ariſtides*, extant in the times of *Euſebius*, and St. *Jerome*, being now loſt, we are in the dark, as to the reign of the Emperor *Adrian*.

Pliny having inquir'd into the character, and behaviour of the Chriſtians, in his letter to *Trajan*, ingenuouſly owns; that excepting their obſtinate refuſal to ſacrifice, he found nothing criminal amongſt them. But though he clears them from any imputation of guilt, yet what he ſays implies, that they had been violently ſuſpected, and openly accuſed (*e*). Some of them he examin'd by Tortures; which won'd ſcarce have been done, unleſs he had entertain'd ſome ſuſpicion of guilt.

Melito of *Sardis*, an Apologiſt for the Chriſtians, *A. D.* 170, lays the foundation of thoſe lying accuſations, in the reigns of *Nero*, and *Domitian* (*f*). And *Tacitus*, ſpeaking of *Nero*'s cruelty towards the Chriſtians, tells us, they were *per flagitia inviſos*, hated for their wicked, and ſcandalous behaviour (*g*).

(*e*) Nomen ipſum, etiamſi flagitiis careat, an flagitia cohærentia nomini puniantur. ——— ——— Propoſitus eſt libellus ſine authore, multorum nomina continens. ——— Quo magis neceſſarium credidi, ex duabus ancillis, quæ miniſtræ dicebantur, quid eſſet veri & per tormenta quærere. Sed nihil aliud inveni, quam ſuperſtitionem pravam & immodicam. *Plin Epiſt. L.* 10. *Epiſt.* 97.

(*f*) ἀφ' ὧν ἡ τῆς συκοφαντίας ἀλόγῳ συνηθείᾳ περὶ τὸν τοιοῦτον ἐνῆναι συμβέβηκε ψεῦδος. *Euſeb. L.* 4. *c.* 26.

(*g*) Haud perinde in crimine incendii, quam odio humani generis convicti ſunt. *Annal. L.* 15.

St.

St. *Peter*, in his first Epistle, suppos'd to be written about the beginning of *Nero*'s reign, seems to allude to those accusations against the Christians, as prevailing in those times. *Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul: having your conversation honest* (or chast and temperate, for the word καλὴν includes every thing that is commendable) *among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evil doers* (as being guilty of most filthy, and incestuous Lusts) *they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorifie God in the day of visitation* (*h*). But it will still appear more probable, that *St. Peter* had an eye to those very calumnies, that are mention'd by the Apologists afterwards; if we consider what *Justin Martyr*, a most unexceptionable witness, at a very little distance from the Apostolick age (*i*), tells us in his dialogue with *Trypho*. The Jews, he says, after our Lord's Resurrection, and Ascension, were so far from repenting of what they had done to the Lord of life, that they sent chosen men from Jerusalem, into all parts of the world, who reported wherever they came, that there was sprung up a wicked and

(*h*) 1 *Pet.* 2. 11, 12. *c.* 3. 16. *c.* 4. 4. As concerning this Sect, we know that it is every where spoken against. *Act.* 28. 22.

(*i*) Μετ' ὀ πολὺ τῶν Ἀποστόλων. *Euseb. L.* 2. *cap.* 13.

atheiſtical ſect of Chriſtians, *accuſing us of thoſe very things, which the infidels at preſent ignorantly charge us with (k).* By which it appears, that the charge of infanticide, inceſt, and atheiſm, is as old as Chriſtianity it ſelf.

For how many years thoſe excellent Chriſtians were perſecuted, by the ſlanderous tongues of bigotted Jews, and idolatrous Pagans, I cannot preciſely determine. About two hundred years after our Lord's Aſcenſion, we find *(l)*, the ſame aſperſions caſt upon the Chriſtians, that were broach'd by the Jews, in the infancy of Chriſtianity, and by them propagated all over the world, with moſt internal malice, and indefatigable induſtry. But 'tis probable, thoſe original calumnies were dropped, and laid aſide, about the middle of the third century; becauſe ſucceeding writers take no notice of them, even when they give a particular account of freſh accuſations, brought againſt the Chriſtians of their own times *(m)*.

(k) Καταλέγονλες ταῦτα, ἅπερ καθ' ἡμῶν οἱ ἀγνοοῦντες ἡμᾶς πάντες λέγουσιν. *Dial. cum Tryph. p.* 235. *vid. pag.* 335. *Origen. contra Cels. L.* 6. *p.* 293. *Cantab. Edit.* Cenſus iſtius diſciplinæ, ut jam edidimus, a Tiberio eſt, cum odio ſui cœpit ſimul veritas, atque apparuit inimica eſſe. *Tertull. Apol. cap.* 7.

(l) Vide *Origen. cont. Cels. Min. Fel.*

(m) Vide *Cyprian. ad Demetrianum. Arnob. Lactant.*

Since

Since in all perſecutions there is a pretence of guilt, and ſome ſuppos'd, imaginary crimes; we may reaſonably conclude, that perſecutions of all kinds ceas'd at the ſame time: and that when the Pagans came to be better acquainted with the Chriſtians, they ſpar'd both their lives, and their reputations. This however is certain, that in the beginning of the fourth Century, thoſe infamous Stories, and ſenſeleſs cavils almoſt entirely ceas'd; and truth, and innocence, by the bleſſing of God, mightily prevail'd.

CHAP. I.

What Crimes the Primitive Christians were accus'd of.

THere was scarce any vice or folly, that human nature under a state of the greatest corruption, is capable of committing, but was imputed to the Primitive Christians. They were represented as Enemies to God, and man (*a*), to every thing that was Sacred, vertuous, and commendable. The best of their Actions, which merited the greatest applause; and will meet with a glorious reward, from the righteous Judge of all mankind, expos'd them to infamy, and contempt, to dangers, and cruelty. The greatest innocence was then the greatest crime, and they were suspected to be guilty of the vilest actions, only because they were the best of men.

I. One of the heaviest accusations they labour'd under, was that of promiscuous, and incestuous lusts. They were charg'd with a community of

(*a*) Christianum hominem omnium scelerum reum, Deorum, Imperatorum, Legum, Morum, naturæ totius inimicum existimas. *Tertull. Apol.*

Wives;

Wives; and of having a criminal, and unnatural commerce, with their own mothers, and ſiſters (*b*). Their feaſts of charity, kept with the ſtricteſt, and moſt religious ſobriety, were tax'd with abominable lewdneſs, and debauchery. After ſupper when they were heated, and grown wanton with a luxurious diet, the candles were put out (as the pagans reported it) and every man enjoy'd the woman, he accidentally met with (*c*).

(*b*) ——— Φασκόντων ὡς κοιναὶς ἁπάντων ἔσας τὰς γυναῖκας ἡμῶν, καὶ διαφόρως μίξει ξυνόντας, ἔπ μὲν καὶ ταῖς ἰδίαις ἀδελφαῖς συμμίγνυθζ. *Theoph. at Autolyc. L.* 3. vide *Juſtin. Mart: Apol* 1, 2 *Athenag. Legat. p.* 4. *Iren. L.* 1. *cap.* 24. *Clem. Alex. L.* 3. *Strom. Oxon Edit. p.* 511. *Origen. contra Cels. L.* 6 *p.* 293, 302. *Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccles. L.* 4. *cap.* 7. *L.* 5. *cap.* 1.

(*c*) ——— Μετὰ τὴν εἰλαπίνην ἐπισβέννυσι τὰς λύχνας, ἀθέσμοις μίξεσιν ἐγκυλιόμεθα. *Juſt. Mart. Dial. cum Tryph. p.* 227.

Et de convivio notum eſt. Paſſim omnes loquuntur. Id etiam cirtenſis noſtri teſtatur oratio. Ad epulas ſolemni die coeunt, cum omnibus liberis, ſororibus, matribus, ſexus omnis homines, et omnis ætatis. Illic poſt multas Epulas, ubi convivium caluit, et inceſtæ libidinis fervor exarſit, canis qui candelabro nexus eſt, jactu offulæ ultra ſpatium lineæ, qua vinctus eſt, ad impetum et ſaltum provocatur. Sic everſo & extincto conſcio lumine, impudentibus tenebris nexus infandæ cupiditatis involvunt, per incertum ſortis: & ſi non omnes opera, conſcientia tamen pariter inceſti; quoniam voto univerſorum appetitur, quicquid accidere poteſt in actu ſingulorum. *Min. Fel.* vide *Tertull. Apol. cap.* 1. 2. 7. *ad Scapulam. cap.* 4. *ad Uxorem. L.* 2. *cap.* 4.

II. They were charg'd with Infanticide, with murdering of Infants, and eating them. A very young ſucking infant was brought, cover'd over with paſte, leſt any one ſhou'd be ſhock'd at the intended barbarity. The child was prick'd all over with pins, or bodkins; and as ſoon as it was dead, they cut the body in pieces, and ate it. They drank the blood, and mutually engag'd not to divulge their ſacred myſteries. This was ſaid to be the Chriſtians method of initiation (*d*).

III. They were accus'd of Atheiſm (*e*).

(*d*) Dicimur ſceleratiſſimi de ſacramento infanticidii, & pabulo inde, & poſt convivium inceſto. *Tertul. Apol. cap.* 7. *ad Scapulam. cap.* 4. Jam de initiandis tirunculis fabula tam deteſtanda, quam nota eſt. Infans farre contectus, ut decipiat incautos, apponitur ei qui ſacris imbuitur: is infans a tirunculo farris ſuperficie, quaſi ad innoxios ictus provocato, cæcis occultiſque vulneribus occiditur: hujus, proh Nefas! Sitienter ſanguinem lambunt, hujus certatim membra diſpertiunt, hac fœderantur hoſtia, hac conſcientia ſceleris ad ſilentium mutuum pignerantur, hæc ſacra ſacrilegiis omnibus tetriora. *Min. Felix.* Vide *Tatian. Aſſyr. contra Græcos. Theoph. ad Autolyc. L.* 3. *Athenag. Legat. pro Chriſtianis. p.* 4. *Juſtin. Mart. Apol.* 1, & 2. *Dial. cum Tryph. p.* 227. *Origen. contra Cels. L.* 6. *p.* 293. *p.* 302. *Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccleſ. L.* 4. *cap.* 7. *L.* 5. *cap.* 1. *Hieron. ad Marcellam adv. Montanum.*

(*e*) —— Ἐνθένδε χὴ ἄθεοι κεκλήμεθα. *Juſt. Mart. Apol.* 1.

Τρία ὀνομάζουσιν ἡμῖν ἐγκλήματα, Ἀθεότητα, θυέστεια δεῖπνα, Οἰδιποδείους μίξεις. *Athenag. Legat. p.* 4.

Αἵρε τὸς ἀθέους. *Eccles. Smyrn. de Polycarp. Mart. cap.* 9. vide *Euſeb. L.* 4. *cap.* 15. *Tertull. Apol. cap* 10. *Min. Fel. Arnob. p.* 16, 21, 116.

IV.

IV. Of worshipping the head of an Ass (*f*).

V. Of Sedition, and being enemies to *Cæsar* (*g*).

VI. They were represented as very ignorant, and unlearned: as the scum and refuse of the people (*h*).

VII. They were charg'd with practising of magick arts (*i*).

(*f*) Nam ut quidam somniastis, caput asininum esse Deum nostrum. *Tertull. Apol. cap.* 16. Sed nova jam Dei nostri in ista civitate proxime editio publicata est, ex quo quidem in frustrandis bestiis mercenarius noxius picturam proposuit cum ejusmodi inscriptione, Deus Christianorum *Ononychites*. Is erat auribus asininis, altero pede ungulatus, librum gestans, & togatus. *cap* 16. Audio eos turpissimæ pecudis caput asini consecratum inepta nescio qua persuasione venerari. Digna & nata religio talibus moribus. *Min. Fel.*

(*g*) Circa Majestatem Imperatoris infamamur. *Tertull. ad Scap. cap.* 2. Publici hostes Christiani. *Apol. cap.* 35. vide *cap.* 29. *& sequent.* vide *Origen. contra Cels. L.* 1. *Min. Fel.*

(*h*) Qui de ultima fæce collectis imperitioribus, & mulieribus credulis sexus sui facilitate labentibus, plebem profanæ conjurationis instituunt. *Min. Fel. p.* 71. ——— maxime indoctis, impolitis, rudibus, agrestibus, quibus non est datum intelligere civilia, multo magis denegatum est differere divina. *Ibid. p.* 112. Μόνους ἠλιθίους, καὶ ἀγενεῖς, καὶ ἀναισθήτους, καὶ ἀνδραποδα, καὶ γυναῖα. καὶ παιδάρια, πιθανὰ ἐθέλειν τοὺς διδάσκοντας τὸν θεῖον λόγον. *Origen. contra Cels. L.* 3. *p.* 141. vide *p.* 121, 137, 144. Nam interdum isti muliebrem, aut anilem superstitionem vocant. *Lactan. L.* 5. *c.* 13. Audeant inquam disputare nobiscum aliquid ejusmodj. Jam profecto ab aniculis quas contemnunt,& a pueris nostratibus error illorum ac stultitia irridebitur. *Ibid. c.* 19. Vide *Arnob. p.* 15, 45, 51, 66, 109. *varior. Edit.*

(*i*) Μετὰ ταῦτα, οὐκ οἶδα πόθεν κινήμενος, ὁ Κέλσός φησι, δαιμόνων τινῶν ὀνόμασι, καὶ καταλήσεσι δοκεῖν ἰσχύειν Χριστιανούς. *Origen. contra Cels. L.* 1. *p.* 7, 30. *L.* 6. *p.* 302. *Euseb. H. E. L.* 3. *cap.* 26.

VIII.

VIII. The various and clashing opinions amongst the Christians, was made an objection against them, and their Religion (*k*).

IX. They were charg'd with corrupting, and interpolating the Sibyllin oracles (*l*).

X. They were said to worship a cross (*m*).

XI. To worship the sun (*n*).

XII. They were said to be the cause of all the signal calamities that befell mankind (*o*).

(*k*) Ἐπειδὴ δὴ ἀκόλουθόν ἐστι πρὸς τὰ ὑπὸ Ἑλλήνων. καὶ Ἰουδαίων ἐπφερόμενα ἡμῖν ἐγκλήματα ἀπολογήσασθαι —— πρῶτον μὲν οὖν αὐτὸ τοῦτο προσάγουσιν ἡμῖν, λέγοντες, μὴ δεῖν πιστεύειν διὰ τὴν διαφωνίαν τῶν Αἱρέσεων *Clem. Alex. Strom. 7. p. 886. Oxon. Edit.* vide *Origen. con. Cels. L. 3. p. 117. 118. L. 5. p. 273. Cantab. Edit.*

(*l*) *Origen. con. Cels. L. 7. p. 368, 9. Lactan. L. 4. c. 15. Constantini Orat. ad Sanctorum cæt. cap. 19. Augustin de civit. Dei. L. 18. c. 46. 47.*

(*m*) Et qui hominem summo supplicio pro facinore punitum, & crucis ligna feralia eorum ceremonias fabulantur, congruentia perditis sceleratisque tribuit altaria, ut id colant quod merentur. *Min. Fel. p. 86. ex Officin. Hackiana.* Non adorandæ sed subeundæ cruces. *p. 105.* vide *Tertull. Apol. cap. 16. Pamel Edit. Cyrill. con. Julian. L. 6.*

(*n*) Alii plane humanius, & verisimilius, solem credunt Deum nostrum. *Tertull. Apol. c. 16.*

(*o*) —— Existiment omnis publicæ cladis, omnis popularis incommodi, Christianos esse causam. Si Tiberis ascendit in mœnia, Si Nilus non ascendit in arva, Si cœlum stetit, Si terra movit, Si fames, Si lues, Christianos ad leonem. *Tertull. Apol. c. 40. ad Scap. cap. 3.* Dixisti per nos fieri, & quod nobis debeant imputari omnia ista, quibus nunc mundus quatitur & urgetur, quod dii vestri a nobis non colantur. *Cyprian. ad Demetrian. Oxon. Edit.* vide *Oros. con. Pagan. Origen. Tract. 28 in Matt. Euseb. H. E. L. 9. c. 7. Arnob. con. gentes. L. 1. Augustin. de Civit. Dei. L. 2. c. 2.*

XIII.

XIII. They were charg'd with an unsociable reservedness and taciturnity, and with performing their religious acts in privacy, and obscurity (*p*).

XIV. They were said to worship the genitals of their priests (*q*).

XV. They were tax'd with obstinacy and desperation, madness and folly (*r*). These

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(*p*) *Celsus* frequently calls the Christian religion, κρύφιον δόγμα. *Origen. con. Cels. p.* 7. *& passim.* Latebrosa & Lucifugax natio, in publicum muta, in angulis garrula. *Min. Fel. p.* 75. vide *p.* 85. 92. 106. Hæc est doctrina sanctorum Prophetarum, quam Christiani sequimur: hæc nostra sapientia, quam isti, qui vel fragilia colunt, vel inanem Philosophiam tuentur, tanquam stultitiam, vanitatemque deridunt: quia nos defendere hanc publice, atque asserere non solemus, Deo jubente, ut quieti, & silentes arcanum ejus in abdito, atque intra nostram conscientiam teneamus; nec adversus istos vere profanos, qui non discendi, sed arguendi, atque illudendi gratia, inclementer Deum, ac religionem ejus impugnant, pertinaci contentione certemus. Abscondi enim, tegique mysterium quam fidelissime oportet; maxime a nobis, qui nomen fidei gerimus. Verum illi hanc taciturnitatem nostram, velut malam conscientiam, criminantur: unde etiam quasdam execrabiles opiniones, de pudicis, & innocentibus fingunt. *Lactant. L.* 7 *cap* 27.

(*q*) Alii eos ferunt ipsius antistitis ac sacerdotis colere genitalia, & quasi parentis sui adorare naturam. Nescio an falsa, certe occultis ac nocturnis sacris apposita suspicio. *Min. Fel. p.* 85.

(*r*) Neque enim dubitabam, qualecunque esset quod faterentur, pervicaciam certe, & inflexibilem obstinationem debere puniri. Fuerunt alii similis amentiæ. *Plin ad Trajan. L.* 10. *Epist.* 97. ——— Μὴ κατὰ φιλὴν παράταξιν ὡς οἱ Χριστιανοί. *Marc. Antonin. L.* 11. *cap.* 3. Sed quidam dementiam existimant, quod cum possimus & sacrificare in præsenti, & illæsi abire, manente apud animum proposito, obstinationem saluti præferamus. *Tertull Apol. c.* 27. *de spectac. c* 1. ——— ἡ ἐπιδὴ ζῶν πολλῶν ζῇ αὐτῇ ἀπονοίᾳ διαμε-

These are all, or at least, the most material objections against the Christians, for the first three hundred years. I shall not take it upon me, to confute those calumnies: this has been already done, by several of the primitive writers, with great judgment, and unanswerable reasoning: but particularly by *Tertullian*, whose Apology discovers an uncommon, and masterly genius, and is one of the most beautiful pieces, that we meet with in antiquity.

διαμενόντων ἐωρῶμεν. *Maxim. Edict. apud Euseb. H. E. L. 8. cap.* 17. vide *Min Fel. p.* 71. *Lactan. L.* 4. *c.* 9. *Arrian. in Epictet. L.* 4. *cap.* 7.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

General reaſons aſſign'd for thoſe calumnies.

BEfore I proceed to inquire, into the grounds and occaſions of every diſtinct article of accuſation, againſt the primitive Chriſtians, I ſhall make ſome general obſervations, which will, in ſome meaſure, ſolve the difficulty, and diſcover the original ſource of every particular calumny.

I. The Heathens bore an implacable hatred towards the Chriſtians, and ſome of them carried their prejudices ſo far, that they wou'd not ſo much as ſpeak to a Chriſtian (*a*). The foundation of this univerſal hatred and abhorrence of the Chriſtian name, ſeems to have been laid by the Jews; who immediately after our Lord's Aſcenſion, ſent choſen men into all parts of the world, on purpoſe to defame the innocent Chriſtians, and to repreſent them as monſters. They curs'd them

(*a*) *Origen. contra Cels. L. 6. p. 294.*

ſolemnly

ſolemnly in their ſynagogues (*b*). They accus'd them before the heathen magiſtrates: and were always the moſt active, and forward in every perſecution (*c*).

Another cauſe of this general hatred was deriv'd from the nature of the Chriſtian religion; which condemn'd at once, the whole ſyſtem of the pagan Theology; and run counter to the ſettled maxims, and notions of a corrupt, ſuperſtitious, and idolatrous world. The Gentiles look'd upon the religion of their country, as of a ſacred original: on the influence of which depended their publick, and private happineſs, and ſecurity: and to ſee their Gods treated with contempt, and all their ſacred rites and ceremonies condemn'd by the Chriſtian religion, made them conceive an irreconcileable averſion to all its profeſſors, and to treat them as the vileſt of men, and the worſt of creatures. Hence they were willing to hear, and believe the heavieſt accuſations againſt the Chriſtians: and ready to forge, or propagate any ridiculous ſtory, that reflected a ſcandal upon them, or their religion. Hence they

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(*b*) Καταρώμενοι ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς ὑμῶν ϑεὸς πιστεύοντας ἐπὶ ϑὸν Χριστόν. *Juſt. Mart. dial. cum Tryph. p.* 234. 266. 366. vide *Hieron. Comment. in Iſ.* 5. 18.

(*c*) *Epiſt. Eccleſiæ Smyrnens. de Polycarpi Martyrio. cap.* 12. 13. 18. vide *Juſtin. Mart. Apol.* 1.

cenſur'd,

cenſur'd, what they did not underſtand, accus'd the Chriſtians without Evidence, and condemn'd them without giving them a hearing. They wou'd not give themſelves the trouble of an enquiry, for fear they ſhou'd diſcover thoſe to be innocent, whom they hated, and were reſolv'd to ruine *(d)*. And this I take to be one principal cauſe, and the grand foundation of all thoſe horrid, and ſcandalous accuſations againſt the primitive Chriſtians.

The truth of this obſervation will be further evinc'd, if we reflect upon the religious diſputes amongſt Chriſtians; for human nature is ſtill the ſame; and the ſame cauſes, will produce the ſame Effects. Even now a days, under the glorious light of the Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt, our religious differences generally terminate in the vileſt calumnies, and the groſſeſt abuſes: and have a fatal tendency to diveſt men of all common humanity, and pity, and to deſtroy all thoſe excellent qualities, and vertues, that are the peculiar grace, and ornament of a Chriſtian. To attempt a reformation of the groſſeſt abuſes, and corruptions in Religion, when countenanc'd by great names, and great numbers, and recommended by an old immemori-

(d) Hinc vulgus in odium noſtri nominis cogunt (dæmones) ut nos odiſſe incipiant homines, antequam noſſe: ne cognitos aut imitari poſſint, aut damnare non poſſint. *Cyprian. de Idolorum vanitate. p.* 14. vide *Tertull. Apol. c.* 1.

al custom; will inevitably bring upon the reformers of them, the same, or as great hardships and miseries, as the primitive Christians met with, from the hands of their barbarous Persecutors. The cruelties of the church of Rome towards the Protestants, are a remarkable proof of this: and 'tis notorious enough, what an infinite number of the most palpable falsities, have been confidently asserted by some, and implicitly believ'd by others, merely with a design, to blacken, and discredit the Protestant Reformation.

" The Huguenots in France (as Mr. *Mezeray* " inform's us) were charg'd with strange crimes. " It was said they roasted young Children, and " after they had made very good chear, the lights " were all put out, and so men and women " mingled together. *Mezeray's Hist. of France. p.* " 648. Two Informers depos'd, that at those mid- " night assemblies they did eat of the paschal " lamb, and roasted pigg; and afterwards put " out the lights, and mingled in an unclean man- " ner. —— This calumny was spread abroad by " the populace, told in the Louvre, and brought " to the ears of the King and Queen: and tho' " the witnesses had been convicted of Falshood " by the Chancellour, that did not hinder it from " making some impression on the Queen. *Ibid.* " *p.* 660.

II. The Heathens were almost as much strangers to the Christians, as if they had liv'd at the remotest distance from them; and therefore 'tis no great wonder, that they so scandalously misrepresented

sented their characters, and behaviour. *Tertullian* tells them, that they did not understand even the word *Christian:* which they pronounc'd *Chrestianus*; and our Lord they call'd *Chrestus* (*e*). They were perfectly unacquainted with the manners of the Christians, and the principles of their Religion, and were resolv'd not to learn (*f*): for they must be conscious, that many of those scandalous accusations were malicious, groundless, and false; and that if they shou'd give the Christians a fair and publick hearing, which was all the favour they desir'd, they cou'd not with any appearance of justice, and reason, oppress them any longer; and shou'd want a specious plea, for further persecutions. Besides, they look'd upon the Christians as the vilest, and most contemptible creatures upon earth: to whom, not the common offices of humanity, and justice, were due: and not to punish them without proof, or evidence of guilt, was indulging them in too great privileges, and putting them upon a level with the rest of mankind.

(*e*) ——— Perperam Chrestianus pronunciatur a vobis, nam nec nominis certa est notitia penes vos. *Apol. c.* 3. vide *Lactant. de vera Sapient. p.* 183. *Sueton. in vita Claudii.*

(*f*) ——ὁ γὰρ οἶδεν τὰ καθ' ἡμᾶς, οὐδὲ θέλει μαθεῖν· προλήψει δὲ συναπάγει κενῇ· διὸ καὶ κείνῃ· διάκεισαι πίνυν ἡμᾶς, ὡς ἀδίκως εἶναι καταλαβόντες, ἀλλ' αὐτῷ μόνῳ τῷ χρεισανὲς εἶναι, τὸ βίον ἀδικεῖν ὑπολαμβάνοντες. *Clem. Alex.* Strom. 4. p. 598.

The Chriſtians living in ſo obſcure, and retir'd a manner, was another reaſon, why the heathens were ſuch perfect ſtrangers to the Chriſtians, and their religion. They were call'd *latebroſa, & lucifugax natio.* A people that liv'd in ſilence and obſcurity, and refus'd to appear in publick. This accuſation, I own, was in a great meaſure true; and yet the Chriſtians were very far from deſerving cenſure, upon that account. For how cou'd they frequent their places of publick reſort, their temples, or theatres, without hearing, or ſeeing ſomething, or other, that muſt give offence to any good Chriſtian (*g*)? The whole world was overrun with Idolatry; and almoſt the whole race of mankind, was tainted with moſt capital vices. How could they converſe freely with the heathens, when they were pointed at, and expos'd, treated with the utmoſt contempt, and the utmoſt cruelty, and continually in danger of being dragg'd to execution? But when the ſtorms of perſecution abated, and the Chriſtians cou'd converſe with the infidels, without the hazard of their lives, and the violation of their conſciences: when the Apologiſts undertook the defence of the Chriſtian cauſe,

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(*g*) Τὰς Θέας ἡμῖν μονομάχων ἡμῶν ἀπείρῃ ὁρᾶν.—— ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τὰς λοιπὰς θεωρίας ὁρᾶν χρή. *Theoph. ad Autol.* L. 3. vid. *Tertullian. de Spectac. de Idololat.*

and

and their writings came inro the hands of their enemies: then the prejudices againſt the Chriſtians gradually wore off, the calumnies ceas'd, and a great number of converts daily crouded into the church. Had the Chriſtians been permitted openly to plead their own cauſe, and the infidels condeſcended to hear, what they did not underſtand; thoſe lying accuſations cou'd not have been of long continuance, and the calumnies muſt have been dropp'd, almoſt as ſoon as forg'd.

The continuance of that mortal hatred and averſion, that Chriſtians of different parties, and denominations, at preſent bear to one another, is chiefly to be aſcrib'd, to the want of a free converſation, and acquaintance, one with another. Adifference in religious, or even political matters, generally keeps the contending parties at a very great diſtance; and makes them hate, and cenſure, whom they do not know: but a familiar converſation, and a willingneſs to hear, what every man has to ſay in his own juſtification, wou'd ſoon diſcover the abſurdity, and falſhood of thoſe mutual cenſures, and accuſations: wou'd be a means of reconciling our differences, and of promoting the Glory of God, *peace on earth, and good will towards men.*

III. The charge againſt the primitive Chriſtians was founded upon groundleſs, and irrational ſurmiſes, and ſupported onely by the Evidence of common fame. The infidels had opportunities enough of diſcovering the truth; but this was not

what they desir'd. They hated the poor Christians, and therefore every ridiculous tale, tho' equally false, and improbable, gain'd an easy credit with a bigotted heathen. There is but little difficulty in persuading men to believe, what they wish to be true. What if the Christians liv'd in a melancholy retirement, and had their religious assemblies in the night? they were narrowly watch'd by their enemies: they were frequently surpris'd whilst at their devotions (*h*). Many of them had unbelieving servants (*i*), who neither wanted inclination to accuse their masters, nor opportunity to know what they did at their sacred assemblies: but all this while there was not one single witness of any tolerable credit produc'd, to justify the truth of any one article of accusation. No one had ever the good fortune, to see that Ass's head, the God of the Christians: nor any one of those infants, they were said to murder. *Cecilius* (*k*) charges the

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(*h*) Tot hostes ejus, quot extranei; & quidem proprii ex æmulatione Judæi, ex concussione milites, ex natura ipsi etiam domestici nostri. Quotidie obsidemur, Quotidie prodimur, in ipsis plurimum cætibus, & congregationibus nostris opprimimur. *Tertull. Apol. cap. 7.*

(*i*) Καὶ δοῦλοί εἰσιν, ἡμῖν τίς μᾶλλον ἢ πλείους, τοῖς ὀλίγοις ἓς ἐκ ἔστι λαθεῖν· ἀλλὰ ἢ τέτων ἕδεις κατ' ἡμῶν τὰ τηλικαῦτα ἐδὲ κατεψεύσατο. *Athenag. Legat.* p. 38.

(*k*) Nescio an falsa, certe occultis ac nocturnis sacris apposita suspicio. —— Vera declarat ipsius pravæ religionis obscuritas. Cur etenim occultare & abscondere quicquid illud colunt magnopere nituntur? Cum honesta semper publico gaudeant, scelera secreta sint. *Min. Fel. p. 85. 90.*

Christians

Chriſtians with monſtrous, and unnatural crimes: but pretends to no evidence, but common report: and he grounds a ſuſpicion of guilt upon the nocturnal aſſemblies, and the privacy, and obſcurity of the Chriſtian worſhip.

Sometimes I own, ſervants, women, and children, were prevail'd upon by menaces and tortures, to accuſe the innocent Chriſtians (*l*): and what wonder is it, that people of wicked diſpoſitions, or of a weak and timorous nature, ſhou'd be tempted to tell a lye, to ſave their lives, or to prevent a ſhocking and inhumane cruelty? They did not rack them, with an intention to extort the truth: but they expreſly commanded them to accuſe the Chriſtians of inceſt, infanticide, and of eating human fleſh; and upon their refuſal, they tortur'd them, till they made them ſay what they pleas'd. In that famous account of the Martyrs of *Lyons* and *Vienne* in *Gaul*, preſerv'd by *Euſebius*, we find (*m*), that heathen ſervants were brought before the Roman General; who being terrify'd at thoſe cruelties, they ſaw the Martyrs ſuffer, were prevail'd upon by the Roman ſoldiers, to accuſe the Chriſtians of unnatural luſts, of murdering of infants, and eating them: and as if the evidence

(*l*) Εἰς βασάνους εἴλκυσαν οἰκέτας ἢ ἡμετέρων, ἢ παῖδας, ἢ γυναῖα, ἢ δι' ἀνικσμὸν φοβερῶν ἐξαναγκάζουσι καλεῖσθαι ταῦτα τὰ μυθολογούμενα. *Juſt. Mart.* Apol. 1.

(*m*) *Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccleſ.* L. 5. *cap.* 1.

had been convincing, and demonstrative, the Persecution was renew'd with greater fury. Long after this, in the reign of *Maximin*, certain infamous women at *Damascus*, being threatned with tortures, own'd that they had formerly been Christians, and had been eye witnesses of all those scandalous, and tragical villainies, that were said to be transacted by the Christians, in private. The testimony of those lewd women was inserted into the spurious acts of *Pilate*, a fable stuff'd with ridiculous blasphemies, and dress'd up purely with an intention, to expose the Christian name. These Acts were, by *Maximin*'s authority, dispers'd over the Roman Empire; and commanded to be read at the publick Schools (*n*). To supply the defect of all this sham evidence against the Christians, the heathens sometimes made their Gods accuse them: and pretended they had some divine, oracular commission, to persecute the Christians (*o*).

But tho' the generality of the heathens censur'd and condemn'd the Christians, upon no better evidence, than that I have mention'd: yet several of the wiser and better sort amongst them, gave no credit to those vulgar calumnies. Even *Trypho* the Jew, who can never be suspected of partiality in favour of the Christians, fairly owns, that those

(*n*) *Euseb. Hist. Eccles.* L. 9. cap. 5, 7.
(*o*) *Euseb. Hist. Eccles.* L. 9. cap. 3.

slanderous

slanderous reports were a groundless fiction (*p*). *Pliny*, tho' a bigotted, and superstitious pagan, after a strict and diligent enquiry, had so much justice and humanity in him, to pronounce the Christians innocent of the popular charge (*q*). *Serenius Granianus*, Proconsul of Asia, complains of the unreasonable hardships the Christians laboured under (*r*). The Emperour *Adrian*'s letter to *Minucius Fundanus*, and the Edicts of *Antoninus Pius*, and of *Marcus Antoninus*, are all in favour of the Christians (*s*): and in a word, those heathens who treated the Christians with most justice and mercy, were generally reputed, some of the best and wisest of men: and the bittereſt enemies of Christianity were men, of the most infamous characters, even according to the representation of the gentile historians (*t*).

IV. Because most of the first converts to Christianity were Jews, and the Christian and Jewish Religion agreed in many particulars; several of the heathens call'd the first Christians *Jews*, and

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(*p*) Περὶ ὧν οἱ πολλοὶ λέγουσιν, ὑ πιστεῦσαι ἄξιον· πόῤῥω γὰ κεχώρηκε τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως. *Just. Dial. cum Tryph.* p. 227.

(*q*) *Epist.* 97. *ad Trajan.*

(*r*) *Euseb. Hist. Eccles.* L. 4. c. 8.

(*s*) *Just. Mart. Apol.* 1. *Euseb.* L. 4. c. 9, 13, 26.

(*t*) Tales semper nobis insecutores, injusti, impii, turpes; quos & ipsi damnare consuestis, & a quibus damnatos restituere soliti estis. *Tertul. Apol.* c. 5.

their

their religion a *Jewish Superstition* (*u*): and whilst they were under this mistake, and foolishly imagin'd, that Judaism, and Christianity was pretty near the same thing; they fastned the same reflections upon the Christians, that had been formerly thrown upon the Jewish nation. This seems to have been partly the foundation, of some of those original Calumnies, against the Primitive Christians.

The Fable of the Ass's head, the pretended God of the Christians, seems to have been deriv'd (as I shall shew hereafter more at large) from that frale and senseless reflection upon the Jewish worship, mention'd by *Apion*, *Tacitus*, and some others (*w*). The charge of infanticide, and of eating human flesh, is pretty much a-kin to *Apion*'s tale of a Greek, that was annually murder'd, and eaten by the Jews, and pretended to be found in their temple, by *Antiochus Epiphanes* (*x*). The charge of promiscuous, and incestuous lusts, suits very well with the character, that *Tacitus*

(*u*) Judæos, impulsore Chresto, assidue tumultuantes, Roma expulit. *Sueton. in vita Claud.* vide *Arrian. in Epictet. l. 2. c. 9. Recognit. S. Clementis. l. 10. c. 64. Homil. Clement. 4. c. 13.*

(*w*) *Joseph. contra Apion. l. 2. Tacit. l. 5. Hist. Democrit. apud Suid. voc.* Ἰουδαῖος.

(*x*) *Joseph. contra Apion. l. 2.*

gives

gives of the Jews (*y*). The Chriſtians were accus'd of an unſociable reſervedneſs, and of treating all men with diſreſpect, excepting thoſe of their own perſuaſion: and the ſame objection was made againſt the Jews (*z*). The Chriſtians were ſaid to be movers of ſedition, and enemies to *Cæſar*: and the ſame accuſation was laid againſt the Jewiſh Nation (*a*).

V. The infidels would make no diſtinction between real and nominal Chriſtians, and condemn'd the whole body of Chriſtians, for the vices, or errors, of a few wicked men. There always was, and always will be, amongſt thoſe who profeſs the name of Chriſt, ſome men of debauch'd, profligate lives, and impious principles: and there were hereticks in primitive Chriſtianity, that were infamous for many blaſphemous tenets, and for all manner of abominable lewdneſs, and debauchery. From theſe was deriv'd a great load of infamy, upon the whole Chriſtian name: and the religion of the Holy Jeſus was blaſphem'd amongſt the gentiles, for their ſakes. The true and

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(*y*) Projectiſſima ad libidinem gens, alienarum concubitu abſtinent, inter ſe nihil illicitum. ——— Profana illic omnia, quæ apud nos ſacra. Rurſum conceſſa apud illos, quæ nobis inceſta. *Hiſt. l.* 5.

(*z*) Adverſus omnes alios hoſtile odium. *Ibid.* Non monſtrare vias, eadem niſi ſacra colenti. *Juvenal, l.* 5. *Satyr.* 14.

(*a*) *Joſeph. de bello Jud. l.* 2. *c.* 8. vide *l.* 7. *c.* 34. *c.* 37.

orthodox

orthodox Chriſtians carefully declin'd all manner of commerce, and converſation with the hereticks: openly diſavow'd their principles: ſolemnly pronounc'd Anathemas againſt them: and the Apologiſts gave (*b*) a publick, and fair repreſentation, of the wide difference, between a true, and heretical Chriſtian: yet notwithſtanding all this, the gentiles charg'd all the villainies, and abſurdities of the hereticks, upon the whole Chriſtian Society. And their partiality and injuſtice in this particular was highly remarkable: For, at the ſame time, that they cenſur'd alike, all thoſe who call'd themſelves Chriſtians: they ſhew'd particular favour to the hereticks, and ſuffer'd them to eſcape with impunity (*c*): but never had any juſtice or mercy, for a ſincere and innocent Chriſtian.

(*b*) *Juſtin Apol.* 1. *Dial. cum Tryph. p.* 253. 306.

(*c*) Μὴ διώκονται, μηδὲ φονέυονται ὑφ' ὑμῶν, κ'αν' δια τὰ ὀνόματα, ἐπιτίμια. *Juſtin. Mart. Apol.* 1.

CHAP

CHAP. III.

The charge of Inceſt accounted for.

HAving aſſign'd ſome general reaſons, for thoſe original calumnies againſt the primitive Chriſtians, I proceed to inquire into the Grounds, and occaſions of every diſtinct article of accuſation.

The firſt that I ſhall mention, is that of promiſcuous, and inceſtuous luſts. The Chriſtians were charg'd with a community of wives, and of having a criminal and unnatural commerce, with their own mothers, and ſiſters. Their feaſts of charity, kept with the ſtricteſt, and moſt religious ſobriety, were tax'd with the moſt abominable lewdneſs, and debauchery. After Supper, when they were heated, and grown wanton with a luxurious diet, the candles were put out (as the pagans reported it) and every man enjoy'd the woman he accidentally met with.

Several of the ancient writers inform us, that it was the looſe and ſcandalous behaviour of the hereticks, that occaſion'd this foul reflection upon the Chriſtians. *Irenæus*, ſpeaking of the abſurd, and

and impious tenets, the luxury, and lewdneſs of *Carpocrates*, and his followers, tells us (*a*); that the gentiles, obſerving the immoralities of thoſe hereticks, who call'd themſelves Chriſtians, took occaſion from thence, to aſperſe the whole body of Chriſtians. *Clement* of *Alexandria* derives this calumny from the ſame cauſe, ſaying; that the followers of *Carpocrates*, and *Epiphanes* maintain, that all wives ought to be in common. ἐξ ὧν ἡ μεγίστη τῷ ὀνόματι ἐφύη βλασφημία. *From whom was deriv'd the greateſt ſcandal upon the Chriſtian name* (*b*). And he adds further, that it was reported of the *Carpocratians*, that after ſupper, they us'd to put out the candles, and play all thoſe infamous pranks, that were charg'd upon the innocent Chriſtians (*c*). *Euſebius* (*d*), and *Epiphanius* (*e*), agree with *Clement*, and *Irenæus*; and found the accuſation of uncleanneſs and inceſt, upon the lewdneſs of the *Carpocratians*, and ſome others of the Gnoſtick hereſy.

(*a*) *L.* 1. *cap.* 24.

(*b*) *Strom.* 3. *cap.* 2. *p.* 511.

(*c*) Τέτυς φασὶ, καὶ πνας ἄλλας ζηλωτὰς τῆς ὁμοίων κακῶν, εἰς τὰ δεῖπνα ἀθροιζομένυς, ——— ἄνδρας ὁμοῦ καὶ γυναῖκας, ——— ἐκ πολλῶν πεπωκότας φῶς, τῇ τῆς λύχνυ ἀπείρῳ, μίγνυσθαι, ὅπως ἐθέλοιεν, αἷς βέλοιντο. Strom. 3. p. 514.

(*d*) *Hiſt Eccleſ. L.* 4. *cap.* 7.

(*e*) *De Hæreſ. Carpocrat. p.* 104.

Carpocrates,

Carpocrates, amongſt other abſurdities, maintain'd, that no man cou'd arrive at the perfection of his myſteries, without moſt conſummate lewdneſs, and luſt; and could not otherwiſe avoid thoſe evil angels, whom he call'd the Governours of the world. He aſſerted that all things ought to be in common, to all men: and that to be deny'd the liberty of enjoying any woman that he lik'd, was an infringement of the common priviledges of Mankind, and contrary to the deſign of the great creator of all things. He denied that any thing was in its own nature bad, or ſinful; and therefore he gave a general licenſe to every one, to act as he pleas'd. In conſequence of this, the female hereticks were ſhameleſs, and abandon'd proſtitutes, and the men were extremely lewd, and laſcivious upon principle, and wrought all manner of uncleanneſs with greedineſs.

It muſt be own'd, that the firſt article of accuſation againſt the Chriſtians, deſcribes exactly enough, the character of the *Carpocratians:* and 'tis highly probable, that the long continuance of the calumny, was owing to the ſcandalous immoralities of the hereticks: but yet, I can by no means allow, that the lewdneſs of *Carpocrates*, *Epiphanes*, and their followers, gave the firſt occaſion, for accuſing the Chriſtians of promiſcuous, and inceſtuous luſts. For, 'tis generally agreed, that *Carpocrates* began to be a heretick, in *Adrian's* reign, about the ſame time that *Juſtin* became

a convert to Chriſtianity. A. D. 130. and therefore the imputation of lewdneſs and inceſt, was prior to *Carpocrates*; for *Juſtin*, whoſe Authority is undeniably good, acquaints us (*f*), that the Chriſtians were accus'd of abominable uncleanneſs, before he was a convert: nay, he dates the three original calumnies of Inceſt, Infanticide, and Atheiſm, from our Lord's Aſcenſion, or very ſoon after. If *Carpocrates* had given the firſt handle for aſperſing the Chriſtians, how could *Juſtin* be ignorant of it, who liv'd at the ſame time? and eſpecially, ſince he wrote a confutation of all hereticks (*g*); and therefore muſt be preſum'd, to be tolerably acquainted with their errors, and immoralities. Whether the hereticks were guilty of thoſe crimes, that were charg'd upon the Chriſtians, as puting out the candle, promiſcuous copulation, and eating of human fleſh, he declares (*h*), he could not tell: from whence one would conjecture, either that *Carpocrates*, had not begun to propagate his heretical villainies, or at leaſt, had made but an inconſiderable progreſs, when *Juſtin* preſented his firſt Apology, in behalf of the perſecuted Chriſtians, A. D. 140. The banquet,

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(*f*) *Apol.* 2.

(*g*) *Apol.* 1.

(*h*) Εἰ δ' καὶ τὰ δόγματα ἐκεῖνα μυθολογούμενα ἕρχα πράττουσι, λυχνίας μὲν ἀναίρουσιν, καὶ τὰς ἀνέδην μίξεις, καὶ ἀνθρωπείων σαρκῶν βορὰς, ἐ γινώσκομεν. *Apol.* 1.

or

or Love feaſt of the *Carpocratians*, as deſcrib'd by *Clem. Alex.* exactly agrees with the firſt accuſation againſt the Chriſtians : but then it muſt be obſerv'd, that *Clement* mentions it only as a report (τ̓ϱ̓ϛ φασι) or admitting it to be true ; who will affirm that the *Carpocratians* were the ſame, towards the latter end of the ſecond century, when *Clement* wrote his *Stromata*, as they were in the time of *Juſtin* ? Every body knows, that the hereticks refin'd upon their maſters, and varied in their practices, even whilſt they retain'd the ſame common appellation : for they thought it a credit, to be the firſt broachers of an error ; and a ſolid reputation, to be ſingularly miſtaken.

Since then the calumny prevail'd, before the hereſy of *Carpocrates*, and *Epiphanes* ; and what *Irenæus*, and *Clement* of *Alex.* ſay, in reality, amounts to no more than this : that the lewdneſs of thoſe hereticks, brought a great ſcandal upon Chriſtianity (not that they were the firſt who gave a handle to the gentiles to aſperſe the Chriſtians) it is evident, that the charge of inceſt, muſt have ſome other foundation.

I ſhall therefore inquire in the next place, whether there were any hereticks, either in, or near the Apoſtolick age, whoſe wicked behaviour could give birth to ſo odious a calumny.

The *Nicolaitan* hereſy, 'tis univerſally agreed, was ſo call'd, from *Nicolas*, one of the ſeven Deacons, mention'd in the Acts of the Apo-

ſiles (*i*): and yet 'tis generally plac'd, later (*k*) than the hereſies of *Baſilides*, and *Saturninus*. This I cannot account for; unleſs we ſuppoſe, that the hereſy was entirely ſuppreſs'd, almoſt as ſoon as it aroſe, (which is agreeable to what *Euſebius* (*l*) ſays of it), and was afterwards reviv'd, about the middle of the ſecond Century. But whatever was the reaſon, why many of the Eccleſiaſtical writers, plac'd this hereſy ſo late: 'tis undeniably evident, that it belongs to the Apoſtolick age: for St. *John*, in the Revelations, written *A. D. 96.* about the latter end of *Domitian*'s reign, makes mention of the *Nicolaitans* (*m*).

Nicolas, the founder of this hereſy, has many advocates (*n*), and many accuſers (*o*). Some maintain his innocence, and throw all the guilt upon the Ψευδωνύμες Νικολαΐτας, thoſe that were falſly call'd *Nicolaitans*: and others, make no diſtinction between the Maſter, and his diſciples. *Clement* of *Alexandria*, a man of great learning, and one that

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(*i*) *Acts* 9 5.

(*k*) *Vid. Iren. Hæreſeſ. Theodoret. Hæret. Fab. Epiphan. Auguſtin. Philaſt. Brix.*

(*l*) Ἐπὶ τούτων δὴ τὰ καὶ ἡ λεγομένη τῶν Νικολαϊτῶν αἵρεσις, ἐπὶ σμικρότατον σωθεῖσα χρόνον. Hiſt. Eccl. Lib. 3. Cap. 29.

(*m*) *Chap.* 2. *verſ.* 6. 15. *Clem. Alex.* fixeth the origin of this hereſy, μὴ πάλαι ἀναληψιν πάλαι τῶν σωζομένων: after our Lord's Aſcention. whilſt the Apoſtles were living. *Strom.* 3. *p.* 522. vide *Iren. l.* 3. *c.* 11.

(*n*) *Clem. Alex. Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccleſ. l.* 3. *cap.* 29. *Theodoret. hær. fab. Conſtitut. Apoſtol. l.* 6. *cap.* 1. *Ignat. interpolat. Epiſt. ad Trall.*

(*o*) *Irenæus. Tertullian. Philaſt. Epiphan. Greg. Nyſſ. Hieron. &c.*

was

was admirably well vers'd, in all ſacred and prophane hiſtory, gives the beſt account of *Nicolas*, and of the origin of the *Nicolaitan* hereſy. He tells us (*p*), that *Nicolas* had a beautiful wife, of whom he was ſaid to be jealous. And to get rid of the imputation, and to ſhow the unreaſonableneſs and injuſtice of the charge, he gave leave to any one to marry his wife, that had a mind to her. This imprudent action was drawn into a precedent; and many wicked men, who were much addicted to ſenſual pleaſures, appeal'd to it, in juſtification of their lewd and filthy converſation. Beſides, he had one very common and familiar expreſſion, which was groſly miſinterpreted, by thoſe who call'd themſelves *Nicolaitans*. He us'd to ſay δεῖν παραχρῆσθαι τῇ σαρκί. *We ought to abuſe the fleſh.* That is to contradict and oppoſe all its inordinate deſires; to keep under the body, and bring it into ſubjection. But the *Nicolaitans* found out a quite different meaning of the phraſe, and gave it an interpretation, that favour'd, and encourag'd all manner of lewdneſs and debauchery. *Nicolas* himſelf, as *Clement* informs us (*q*), was ſtrictly juſt to the marriage bed: and his children, who liv'd

(*p*) *Strom.* 3. *p.* 522.
(*q*) Ibid. *p.* 523.

to a good old age, died virgins. But his pretended followers ἀναίδην ἐκπορνέυουσι, were ſhameleſs and abominable fornicators (*r*). They had a criminal converſation with all women without diſtinction (*ſ*), and were as infamous for luſt, and luxury, as the followers of *Carpocrates*, and *Epiphanes*.

There were other hereticks in the Apoſtolick age, that were equally ſcandalous, for their obſcene, and filthy practices, and thoſe were the followers of *Simon*, the parent, and inventer of all heretical errors, and impurities. This vile impoſtor ſaid, that he was δύναμιν Θεοῦ τὴν μεγάλην. *the great power of God:* and that he appear'd to the Samaritans as the Father, to the Jews as the Son, and to the Gentiles as the Holy Spirit. He had one *Helen*, an infamous ſtrumpet, for his companion; whom he call'd the firſt conception of his mind, and the mother of all things (*t*). This impious, and blaſphemous monſter aſſerted, that men were not ſav'd by good works, but by his grace. That no action was in its own nature

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(*r*) Ibid.

(*ſ*) Indiſcrete vivunt. *Iren. adv. Hæreſ. l.* 1. *c.* 27.

——— Sectam turpiſſimam, qua placet uſus indifferens fœminarum. *Auguſtin. de Hæreſ.* Nicolaus qui unus de ſeptem diaconis fuit, die noctuque nuptias faciens, obſcœnos, & auditu quoque erubeſcendos coitus ſomniavit. *Hieron. adv. Luciferi.* vide *Hieron. ad Cteſiphontem. Tertul. præſcript. adv. hæret. c.* 46.

(*t*) *Iren. l.* 1. *c.* 20.

righteous,

righteous, or ſinful; but only by accident (*u*). Being himſelf a man of wicked diſpoſitions, and naturally prone to venery, he maintain'd a community of wives (*w*): and inſtituted myſteries, at the celebration of which, was committed ſuch monſtrous, and unparallell'd lewdneſs, as almoſt exceeds belief (*x*). Salvation he promiſes to thoſe, who obey his directions, and carefully obſerve his ſacred, and myſterious rites. In conformity to their maſters commands, and example, the *Simonians* contended, who ſhou'd exceed one another in lewdneſs: they gave a looſe to their brutal appetite, and abus'd every woman that came in their way.

The riſe of the *Simonian*, and *Nicolaitan* hereſies, ſuits very well with the Chronology of the firſt antichriſtian calumny, as fix'd by *Juſtin Martyr*. For the *Nicolaitan* hereſy, the later of the two, was, according to *Irenæus* (*y*), a long time before that

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(*u*) Ibid. vide *Theodoret. Hæret. fab. l.* 1. *c.* 1.

(*w*) Ἐδίδαξε ὃ διχεστοιΐαν, μίξιν μολυσμῶ, γυναικῶν ἀδιαφορείαν. *Epiphan. l.* 1. *p.* 52.

Docebat deteſtandam turpitudinem, indifferenter utendi fœminis. *Auguſtin. de Hæreſ.* Vide *Theodor. Hæret. Fab. L.* 1. *cap.* 1.

(*x*) Μυσήεια ὃ κατέθετο ἀισχεστηθῶ, φύσεώς τε σωμάτων, ὅπως σμυκτέρην ὑφηγήσομαι· ἀνδρῶν μὲν διὰ τῆς ἀπῤῥοίας, γυναικῶν δὲ διὰ τῆς καθ' ἑδισμὸν τῆς ἐμμηνίων. —— Καὶ ταῦτα εἶναι μυσήεια ζωῆς, γνώσεώς τε τῆς τελειοτάτης. *Epiphan. de Simone p.* 58. vid. *Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccleſ. L.* 2. *cap.* 13.

(*y*) *L.* 3. *cap.* 11.

of *Cerinthus*; and therefore not many years after our Lord's Aſcenſion. But the hereſy of *Simon*, ſeems to have commenc'd with Chriſtianity it ſelf. For *Philip* baptiz'd *Simon* at *Samaria*, *A. D.* 35 (z). The ſame, or at loweſt, in the following year, St. *Peter* ſharply rebuk'd *Simon*, and rejected his impious propoſal, with a reſentment, and indignation that it deſerv'd: and *Simon*, by way of revenge, deſerted the Chriſtian ſociety, and broach'd his blaſphemous, and heretical tenets (*a*).

And as there is an exact agreement, between the riſe of thoſe hereſies, and the date of the firſt article of accuſation, ſo the laſciviouſneſs, and uncleanneſs of thoſe hereticks, is aptly enough deſcrib'd, by the firſt calumny againſt the primitive Chriſtians. And ſince in the infancy of Chriſtianity, and before it was well known, real and heretical Chriſtians, by an eaſy and natural miſtake, might be confounded; might paſs under the ſame common appellation, and be thought in reality the ſame; it muſt be exceeding probable, that the *Simonian*, and *Nicolaitan* hereticks, gave the firſt occaſion, to Jews and Gentiles, of aſperſing the innocent Chriſtians, and entail'd an infamy upon the

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(z) *Acts* 8. vid. *Pearſon. Annal. Paulin.*

(*a*) There ſeem to be frequent alluſions to the hereſies of *Simon* and *Nicolas*, in the writings of the Apoſtles. See *Epheſ.* 5. 12. 2 *Tim.* 3. 6. 2 *Pet.* 2. *Jud. Epiſt.* 1. *Corinth.* 6.

whole

whole Christian name, that descended down to succeeding generations.

As to that branch of the first article of accusation, that taxes the Christians with a carnal knowledge, even of their own mothers and sisters, it may also be accounted for another way. The primitive Christians, saluted one another, by the title of brethren, and sisters: the old men they call'd fathers, and the aged matrons they call'd mothers (*b*). St. *Paul* gives it in charge to *Timothy*, not *to rebuke an elder, but intreat him as a father, and the younger men as brethren. The elder women as mothers, the younger as sisters, with all purity* (*c*). In the language of a primitive Christian, the married women were call'd sisters by their husbands, and treated as such, after the time of child-bearing was over (*d*). Now the infidels observing the Christians conversing with freedom and familiarity, and cohabiting with those, whom they call'd mothers, and sisters, entertain'd a suspicion of unnatural guilt, and charg'd the Christians with incestu-

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(*b*) Ὁ νομοθέτης ὁ πρῶτος ἔπεισεν αὐτοὺς, ὡς Ἀδελφοὶ πάντες εἶεν ἀλλήλων. *Lucian. de morte Peregrini.*

(*c*) 1 *Tim.* 5. 1, 2. 1 *Cor.* 5. 11. 7. 15. *Rom.* 16. 1.

(*d*) Conjugi tuæ quæ futura est Soror tua. *Hermas Vis.* 2. *cap.* 2. Sed nec sororem tuam negligas. *Ibid. cap.* 3. Vid. *Clem. Alex. Strom.* 3. 1 *Cor.* 9. 5. Ἀδελφὴ δὲ τοῦτο ἡ γυνὴ οὐ τῷ παιδοποιίαν ὡς ἡ ὁμοπάλεια κρίνεται. *Clem. Alex. Strom.* 6. *p.* 790. Nobiscum dormies ut frater non ut maritus. *Herm. Simil.* 9. *cap.* 11. *Athenag. Legat. p.* 36.

ous copulation. They had no notion of that ſpiritual relation, on which the Chriſtian brotherhood is founded, eſpecially whilſt Chriſtianity was in its infancy: and tho' afterwards, they cou'd not be ignorant what was meant by brother and ſiſter in the Chriſtian ſenſe, yet right or wrong, they propagated the calumny, to throw an odium upon the Chriſtians, and to irritate the rage of their mercyleſs enemies.

The heathens, 'tis not improbable, were the more ready to believe the Chriſtians guilty of inceſt, becauſe ſome illiterate, unciviliz'd, and barbarous people (ſuch as the Chriſtians were ſuppos'd to be) were tax'd with that vice. Amongſt the Perſian *Magi*, inceſtuous copulation, and even with their own mothers, was look'd upon as a laudable practice (*e*). The ancient *Britons*, according to *Julius Cæſar*'s account of them, were guilty of promiſcuous, and inceſtuous luſts (*f*). The *Medes*,

Indians,

(*e*) Νομίζουσιν γὰρ Ἕλληνες φευκτὸν εἶναι τὸ συγγενεῖς μιγῆναι, χάλλιστον δὲ τιθέασιν ὄζειν ἐπιθύμημα ἀφ' ἑαυτῆς τοῖς Περσῶν Μάγοις. *Tatian. Aſſyr. contra Græc. p.* 164. vide *Philo. Jud. de Decalogo. Clem. Alex. Pædagog. L. 1. cap. 7. p.* 131. *Strom. 3. p.* 515. *Origen. contra Celſ.* L. 5. *Euſeb. de laud. Conſtant. p.* 648. *Alex. ab Alex.* L. 1. *cap*, 24.

(*f*) Uxores habent deni duodeniq; inter ſe communes, & maxime fratres cum fratribus, & parentes cum liberis. *Comment.* L. 5. Scottorum natio uxores proprias non habet, & quaſi Platonis politiam legerit, & Catonis ſectetur exemplum, nulla apud eos conjunx propria eſt, ſed ut cuiq; libitum fuerit, pecudum more laſciviunt. *Hieron. adv.*

Indians, and *Æthiopians*, are said to have had a criminal, and unnatural commerce, with mothers and grand mothers, with daughters and grand-daughters (*g*). *Nero*, that monster of lust, and cruelty, is said to have been too familiar with his own mother (*h*). *Caligula* debauch'd all his sisters, and cohabited with one of them, as if she had been his legal wife (*i*) : and in a word, there are numberless instances of incestuous mixtures, to be met with in civiliz'd nations, as well as in those, whom the Greeks and Romans call'd rude, and barbarous. From hence perhaps was deriv'd the charge of incest against the primitive Christians, whom the heathens look'd upon as the vilest of creatures, and capable of committing even the worst of crimes, that the worst of men were guilty of.

What the infidels objected against the nocturnal assemblies and the Christian *Agapæ*, or Love feasts,

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adv. Jovinian. L. 2. *Recognit. Clement. cap.* 24. *Strabo*, speaking of the old Inhabitants of *Ireland*, tells us, it was reported of them, that they ate human flesh, and lay with their Mothers and Sisters. *Geograph. l.* 4. *p.* 139. vide *Dion. Cass. l.* 76. *p.* 866.

(*g*) *Heron. ibid.* vide *Quint. Curt. l.* 8. *p.* 204.

(*h*) *Sueton. in vit Neronis. cap.* 28.

(*i*) Cum omnibus sororibus suis stupri consuetudinem fecit. ——Ex his Drusillam vitiasse virginem pretextatus adhuc creditur. —— In modum justæ uxoris propalam habuit. *Sueton. in vit. Calig. cap.* 24. vide *cap.* 36. *cap.* 26. *in vit. Claud. cap.* 22. *in vit. Domit. Dion. Cass. l.* 67. *p.* 760.

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is an exact deſcription of their own impurities, and of that abominable lewdneſs, that was committed in all the pagan temples, almoſt in all parts of the world.

Nero, who made a judgment of other mens vicious diſpoſitions by his own, was of opinion, that no man was chaſt: but that ſome had got the art of concealing their vices better than others (*k*). and I don't in the leaſt doubt, but it was a conſciouſneſs of their own uncleanneſs, and immoralities, that made the heathens caſt ſo vile a reflection upon the ſacred aſſemblies of Chriſtians. They obſerv'd the Chriſtians privately aſſembling in the night, men and women together. They conſider'd that temptations would ariſe, and that darkneſs and retirement would give favourable opportunities. They knew that thoſe private meetings were prohibited by the laws of the twelve tables, and were not able to aſſign the reaſon, why the Chriſtians ſhou'd aſſemble together with that privacy, upon any honourable deſign. They had heard, it may be, of the kiſs of charity amongſt Chriſtian (*l*); which they con-

(*k*) Ex nonnullis comperi, perſuaſiſſimum habuiſſe eum, neminem hominem pudicum, aut ulla corporis parte purum: verum pleroſq; diſſimulare vitium, & calliditate obtegere. *Sueton. de Nerone. cap.* 29.

(*l*) Ἀλλήλως φιλήματι ἀσπαζόμεθα παυσαμένων ἡμῶν εὐχῶν. *Juſtin. Mart. Apol.* 1. vide *Clem. Alex. Pædagog. l.* 3. *p.* 301.

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ſtrued a ſign of laſciviouſneſs, and an introduction to lewdneſs. They were ſenſible of the corruptions of human nature, and ignorant, how nature is to be improv'd by grace, and the moſt headſtrong paſſions ſubdued by religion. They knew what lewdneſs was committed in their temples, under the ſpecious covert of religion; and therefore they caſt a vile reflection upon the religious aſſemblies of Chriſtians, and taxed them with uncleanneſs, only becauſe they were guilty themſelves.

The Tyrant *Licinius*, an implacable enemy to the Chriſtians, by a publick Edict, forbad the Chriſtian men and women to meet together, at their places of publick-worſhip. To preſerve inviolable the chaſtity of the Chriſtian women, he order'd that no Biſhop ſhould inſtruct the women; but that they ſhould be taught by thoſe of their own ſex. He commanded the Chriſtians to have their aſſemblies without the gates, in the open fields; under a pretence, that the air was more wholſome there, than in crowded cities. Now he produc'd no evidence of any guilty commerce amongſt Chriſtians, at their ſacred aſſemblies: he onely intimated a ſuſpicion of guilt, and the reaſon and foundation of this ſuſpicion is mention'd by

by the hiſtorian (*m*), *viz.* that he was infamous for adultery, and all manner of lewdneſs and debauchery, and like *Nero*, judg'd of other men's vicious inclinations by his own. I mention this Edict of *Licinius*, not as being any ways the occaſion of the firſt antichriſtian calumny, but as it deſcribes, the ſentiments of the pagans, and affords a remarkable proof, of what I am contending for, that the reflection upon the Chriſtian aſſemblies had its original riſe, from the impure and laſcivious practices of the Heathens.

Cecilius, in *Minucius Felix*, charge's the Chriſtians with lewdneſs, becauſe they ſaluted one another by the name of brother, and ſiſter (*n*). Now the reaſon of this accuſation is manifeſtly deriv'd, from a common practice amongſt the heathens, who, whilſt they were carrying on a luſtful intrigue, and had a mind to conceal their wickedneſs, under an honourable name, call'd one another brother, and ſiſter. There are many inſtances of this kind to be met with, in the hea-

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(*m*) *Euſeb. de vita Conſtantini. L.* 1. *cap.* 52, 53.

(*n*) Paſſim etiam inter eos quædam libidinum religio miſcetur : ac ſe promiſcue appellant fratres, & ſorores, ut etiam non inſolens ſtuprum interceſſione ſacri nominis fiat inceſtum. *p.* 81.

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then Poets (*o*). Brother and sister was the Language of lust, amongst the heathens; and therefore it pass'd for such amongst the Christians, who were censur'd for crimes, that their enemies onely were guilty of.

'Tis almost incredible, what filthy lewdness was committed by the pagans, and especially in their Temples; which were no better than publick stews, and receptacles for common prostitutes. It was not without good reason, the Satyrist ask'd the following question,

Quo non prostat fœmina Templo (p)?

What Temple is there where there are not prostitutes? In the Temple at *Corinth*, dedicated to *Venus*, there liv'd no less than a thousand harlots. The mysteries of *Cybele* were nothing but a scene of matchless uncleanness, and monstrous lusts. The sacred rites of *Venus* were of the same nature: and almost the whole gentile world (*q*), under a pretence

(*o*) Fratrem te vocat, & soror vocatur. Cur vos nomina nequiora tangunt? *Martial. L.* 2. *Epig.* 4. Quare desine me vocare fratrem, ne te carmenion vocem sororem. *Ibid. L.* 10. *Ep.* 65. ——— Concilio tibi O Juvenis, Sororem. Habes & tu quidem fratrem, neq; me piguit quærere, sed quid prohibet & sororem adoptare? *Petron. Sat. p.* 458. Vid. *Ovid. Metamorph. L.* 9. *Vers.* 557.

(*p*) *Juvenal. Sat.* 9. *v.* 23.

(*q*) Ὁι μὲν δὴ ἄλλοι ἁπάντες ἀνθρωποι, πλὴν Αἰγυπτίων καὶ Ἑλλήνων, μίσγονται ἐν ἰρηΐσι. *Herodot. L.* 2. *cap.* 64. Tantaq;

pretence of religion, was guilty of uncleanneſs in the temples. And for this very reaſon, the heathens tax'd the private meetings of Chriſtians with lewdneſs, and gave an odious character of their nocturnal aſſemblies.

I have now done with the firſt article of accuſation againſt the primitive Chriſtians, and have attempted, as well as I am able, to account for the imputation of promiſcuous, and inceſtuous luſts. But before I proceed to the ſecond calumny, it may not be improper, to inquire a little further, into the character of the primitive Chriſtians; to ſee whether they gave any juſt grounds for cenſure, or any ways occaſion'd that ſevere charge of unnatural lewdneſs, by their own vicious conduct, or imprudent behaviour.

I am far from vindicating every thing, that was done by the primitive Chriſtians: as they were men, they cou'd no more be entirely exempt from error, than they were from mortality: but it muſt be allow'd me, that the corruptions in faith and in practice, were nothing near ſo numerous, and great, then, as they were, in ſucceed-

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Tantaq: animorum inſipientia fuit, & tam præceps libido imperiti vulgi, ut omnes fere mortales in templis coire, & nefandis libidinibus immiſceri, ac pudendis genitalibus ſacrum facere, quod procreationis ſeminarium forent, nefas non putarent. *Alex. ab Alex. Genial. dier. L. 6. cap. ult. Tertul. Apol. cap.* 15.

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ing ages: for their vicinity to the Days of a God incarnate, gave them a more lively ſenſe of the divine mercies, and inflam'd their zeal: this zeal reform'd their manners, and made them conſcientiouſly diſcharge the duties of a Chriſtian: this innocence of Life entitled them to God's holy Spirit, and 'tis that bleſſed Spirit that leads men into all truth, and holineſs.

As to the charge of uncleanneſs, there is nothing in nature could ever have been more malicious, barbarous, and unjuſt. For there was ſcarce any one vertue, by which the firſt Chriſtians were more eminently diſtinguiſh'd, than by that of chaſtity. A vertue more peculiarly cultivated by the Chriſtians, and guarded with the utmoſt circumſpection, and care. When they were tempted to luſt, by many artful and moving perſuaſions; and terrify'd by a proſpect of inhuman tortures; they generally preferr'd a painful, and ignominious death; and dreaded more the ſollicitations of ſenſual Pleaſures, than the inveterate rage of their cruelleſt enemies. If thoſe early Chriſtians were any ways culpable, it was for having too rigid notions of continency, and for carrying it further, than perhaps they had any lawful warrant, either from ſacred Scripture, or Apoſtolical practice. They were ſo far from having a criminal commerce with all ſorts of women, without diſtinction; that they either liv'd under a ſtate of perpetual virginity, or married but once, and knew

knew no other woman all their lives (*r*). Second and third marriages were generally reputed unlawful, and were call'd by no better a name, than a plauſible Adultery (*ſ*). A Digamiſt was a name of reproach, and thoſe that had been twice married after baptiſm, were unqualify'd for holy orders, by the canons of the primitive church (*t*).

I cannot ſay that the reaſons, upon which ſecond and third marriages were condemn'd, ſeem to have much weight in them; or that the texts of Scripture, appeal'd to upon this occaſion, are pertinently cited (*u*). However it was a very pardonable miſtake, and eſpecially as it proceeded, from an honeſt Zeal, and a laudable deſign of promoting Chriſtian purity, and piety. A repetition of marriage was ſuppos'd to proceed from a criminal in-

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(*r*) Εὐφρὶς δ' ἂν πολλὰς εὕροι παρ' ἡμῖν, καὶ ἄνδρας καὶ γυναῖκας, καλαγηρήσκοντας ἀγάμους. ——— ἢ ὅτος τὶς ἐτέχθη, μιᾶς, ἢ ἐφ' ἑνὶ γάμῳ. *Athenag. legat. p.* 37. At nos pudorem non facie, ſed mente præſtamus, Unius Matrimonii vinculo libenter inhæremus. Cupiditatem procreandi aut unam ſcimus, aut nullam. *Min. Fel. p.* 307. vid. *p.* 310. *Juſt. Mart. Apol.* 1. *Theoph. ad Autol. l.* 3. *Origen contra Celſ. l.* 7. *p.* 365.

(*ſ*) Ὁ γὰρ δεύτερος γάμος εὐπρεπὴς ἔξω μοιχείας. *Athenag. Legat. p.* 37. ——— Samaritanæ illi prævaricatrici, quæ in uno viro non manſit, ſed fornicata eſt in multis nuptiis. *Iren. l.* 3. *cap.* 17. vid. *Conſtitut. Apoſtol. l.* 3. *cap.* 2.

(*t*) *Canon. Apoſtol.* 17. *vid. Origen. Homil.* 17. *in* Luc. *Tertul. de exhort. caſtit. cap.* 7. *ad uxor. l.* 1. *cap.* 7. *Hieron. adv. Jovinian. l.* 1.

(*u*) Vide *Athenag. p.* 37. *Conſtitut. Apoſtol. l.* 3. *cap.* 2.

dulgence

dulgence of a carnal appetite, and for this reaſon, it was more ſeverely cenſur'd by a primitive Chriſtian.

The ſole end of marriage, in their opinion, was procreation of children; and therefore during the time of geſtation, and after the time of child-bearing was over, they abſtain'd from all converſation with their wives (*w*). The uſe of the marriage-bed was confin'd, under ſtrict regulations, and all exceſſes and abuſes there, were condemn'd by a primitive Chriſtian (*x*). Adultery, and fornication was very rare, in thoſe Days; and the guilty criminal never eſcap'd the cenſure of eccleſiaſtical authority: he was ſolemnly turn'd out of the Chriſtian ſociety, and not re-admitted, till he had gone through a long courſe of pennance, and had given evident proof, of a true humiliation, and ſorrow, and of a ſincere reſolution to reform (*y*). They practis'd the duties of mortification, and ſelf-denial, in an eminent, and wonderful degree. It was no hard matter for them, to keep within the bounds of ſobriety, and chaſtity, who kept

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(*w*) Οὐκ ἐγαμῶμεν, εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ παίδων ἀναλέξῃ. *Juſt. Mart. Apol.* 1. vide *Athenag. Legat. p.* 37.

(*x*) Nos ab iſto eventu diligentiſſima & fideliſſima caſtitas ſepſit, quantumq; ab ſtupris, & ab omni poſt matrimonium exceſſu, tantum & ab inceſti caſu, tuti ſumus. quidam multo ſecuriores, totam vim hujus erroris virgine continentia depellunt, ſenes, pueri. *Tertul. Apol. cap.* 9.

(*y*) Vide *Can. Ancyr.* 20. *Baſil.* 7, 58, 59. *Apoſtol.* 53.

under all inordinate deſires of the fleſh, by an amazing temperance, and abſtinence. Like St. *Paul*, they *were in hunger, and thirſt, in faſtings often, in cold, and nakedneſs.* Their meat was very often the product of uncultivated nature; and the beaſt and his owner, generally drank at the ſame fountain. They ate and drank, as if they ſuſpected a poyſon; and laid themſelves down to reſt, as if they were to awake in another world.

The reaſon why the grand adverſary of mankind, ſo ſucceſsfully prevails, is, the fleſh takes part with the Tempter, and betrays us, under the diſguiſe of friendſhip, and pleaſure. Weak human nature enters into the conſpiracy, and the man is divided againſt himſelf. When the paſſions have been humour'd a long time, reaſon ſubmits to ſenſe; is under the dominion of the will, and the ſlavery of every inferiour faculty: and you may as well talk a tempeſt into ſilence, as make a darling, habituated paſſion, hear the voice of reaſon, or religion. Thoſe worthy Chriſtians were very ſenſible of this: ſo that they guarded againſt all the ſollicitations of ſenſe, and us'd the good creatures of God to ſupport nature, and not to emprove its corruptions. They were ſtrangers to delicacies, ſoftneſs, and eaſe; and lead a life of ſorrows, in hopes of obtaining a joyful reſurrection. Their crucify'd Lord was in Heaven, and therefore their affections, their converſation was there.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

The charge of Infanticide accounted for.

THEY were charg'd with Infanticide, with murdering of infants, and eating them. A very young ſucking infant was brought to the prieſt, cover'd over with paſte, leſt any one ſhou'd be ſhock'd at the intended barbarity. The child was prick'd all over with pins, or bodkins; and as ſoon as it was dead, they cut the body in pieces, and ate it. They drank the blood, and mutually engag'd not to divulge their ſacred myſteries. This was ſaid to be the Chriſtians method of Initiation.

This calumny, which the primitive Chriſtians complain'd of, as the cruelleſt of all (*a*), is very hard to be accounted for: ſince the Apologiſts have left us no hints, whereby we can diſcover, its true cauſe, and original foundation. The firſt Chriſtians were many times cenſur'd, for vices and follies that were not their own; and the villanies,

(*a*) *Theoph. ad Autol. p.* 119.

and abſurdities of a few ſpurious, and heretical Chriſtians, were frequently put to the account of the whole Chriſtian ſociety: but to deal ingenuouſly, I cannot find any ſufficient reaſon, or authority, to tax the primitive hereticks, with giving the infidels a handle to accuſe the Chriſtians, of infanticide, and of eating human fleſh.

The practices of the *Montaniſts*, as deſcrib'd by the fathers of the fourth century, are pretty much of a piece, with the ſecond antichriſtian calumny. St. *Auſtin* (*b*), *Epiphanius* (*c*), and *Philaſtrius* (*d*) tell us, that the *Montaniſts*, at one of their feſtivals, us'd to take a child of a year old, and prick him all over his body with needles. The extracted blood they mix'd with flower of wheat, and of this they made their ſacramental bread. If the child ſurviv'd this cruelty, he was look'd upon as an high prieſt: and if he died he was reputed a martyr. *Cyril* of *Jeruſalem* carries the charge againſt the *Montaniſts* a great deal further, and in exact conformity to the ſecond article of accuſation

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(*b*) Nam de infantis anniculi ſanguine, quem de toto ejus corpore minutis punctionum vulneribus extorquent, quaſi Euchariſtiam ſuam conficere perhibentur, miſcentes eum farinæ, panemq; inde facientes: qui puer ſi mortuus fuerit, habetur apud eos pro martyre: ſi autem vixerit, pro magno ſacerdote. *De Hæreſ.* 26. Vide *de Hæreſ.* 27.

(*c*) *Hæreſ.* 48. *p.* 416, 417.

(*d*) *Hæreſ.* 49.

againſt

againſt the primitive Chriſtians, tells us, that they cut the child in pieces and ate him (*e*). *Iſidore Peluſiota* too taxes the *Montaniſts* with magick, and murdering of infants (*f*).

This whole ſtory, I muſt confeſs, appears to be a fiction, and a mere calumny: for *Epiphanius*, *Auſtin*, and *Philaſtrius* ſpeak of it doubtfully, and only as a common report. And on the other hand, the *Montaniſts* themſelves ſtoutly deny'd the charge, and vindicated their innocence in this matter (*g*). *Jerome* gives little or no credit to this report (*h*); and the author of that catalogue of hereſies, that goes under the title of *Predeſtinatus*, rejects it as a fable (*i*): and for this weighty, and ſubſtantial reaſon, *viz.* the firſt writers againſt *Montaniſm* take no notice of it: he means, I ſuppoſe, *Aſterius Urbanus*, and *Apollonius*, that are mention'd by *Euſebius* (*k*).

But allowing the charge againſt the *Montaniſts* to be true, and founded upon undeniable facts: yet the ſecond calumny againſt the primitive Chri-

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(*e*) *Catech.* 16. *p.* 178.
(*f*) *L.* 1. *Epiſt.* 242.
(*g*) *Theodoret. Hæret. Fab. L.* 3. *cap.* 2.
(*h*) *Epiſt. ad Marcellam adverſus Montanum.*
(*i*) Cætera quæ dicuntur quaſi incerta prætereo: de infantis ſanguine eos accipere. Quod ideo dicimus, ne videamur ignorare omnia, quæ de iis dicuntur. Hi enim qui contra eos ſcripſerunt, nihil hinc penitus memorarunt. *Cap.* 26. *L.* 1.
(*k*) *Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccleſ. L.* 5. *cap.* 16, 18.

ſtians, cou'd not be occaſion'd by thoſe hereticks: for, murdering of infants, and eating of human fleſh, ſeems to have been (as I have already ſhown) one of thoſe original objections, that are as old as Chriſtianity it ſelf, or very near it. When as the *Montaniſt* hereſy did not ſpring up, till about the middle of the ſecond century. *Euſebius* dates the riſe of it, from the year 170 (*l*). The *Alexandrian Chronicle* fixes it ten years later. *Blondel* ſuppoſes (*m*), that it began about the year 140: and *Epiphanius* ſeveral years ſooner (*n*). *And indeed there can hardly be any thing more intricate* (to uſe the words of the learned author of the hiſtory of *Montaniſm*) *than to find out the true date of the riſe of* Montaniſm, *amidſt the variety of conjectures, and critical remarks upon it* (*o*). However it is apparent enough, that it had its riſe ſome time in the ſecond century; and therefore is of a much later date than the ſecond antichriſtian calumny.

Epiphanius tells a ſtory of the *Gnoſticks*, which is parallel to that, which is related of the *Montaniſts*: but neither does this give any further light to our inquiry, nor diſcover the original ſource of the calumny. The *Gnoſticks*, he ſays, by ſome violent method or other, us'd to draw a child out

(*l*) *Hiſt. Eccleſ. L.* 5. *cap.* 3.
(*m*) *Sibyll. L.* 2. *cap.* 2.
(*n*) *Hæreſ.* 48. *p.* 404, 455.
(*o*) *Hiſt. of Montaniſm. p.* 77.

of

of its mothers womb, and beat it to pieces in a mortar: and left this odd sort of food shou'd be nauseous to a squeamish stomach, they mix'd with it honey, pepper, and some other spices. When this was done they all tasted of it, and this they call'd τέλειον πάσχα, *a perfect passover* (p).

Upon this monstrous and incredible story, I observe, first. That it rests upon the single authority of *Epiphanius*, which, to speak impartially, is none of the best. For tho' we have from him, the fullest, and most particular account that is extant, of the heresies for the first four hundred years: and he was justly celebrated for his great learning, and piety; yet he has intermix'd so many strange, and improbable relations, as leave but too just room to suspect that he was a man of great credulity, and easily impos'd upon. Whilst he follows *Justin*, *Irenæus*, and *Hippolytus*, great and venerable names, his labours are highly useful, and commendable: but in describing the heresies of his own time, where one might have expected the greatest exactness, there are too many things, that seem to border upon fable, and fiction.

2. *Irenæus* has left us a very exact account of the *Gnostick* hereticks, in the Apostolick age, and several years after. We learn from him that the *Simonians* were call'd *Gnosticks* (q): and that several

(p) *Hæres.* 26. p. 87.

(q) Simoniani, a quibus falsi nominis scientia accepit initia. *Iren. l.* 1. *cap.* 23.

of the ſucceeding hereticks were fond of that name; ſince they pretended to a knowledge, ſuperior to that of the reſt of mankind. He particularly deſcribes their errors, and abominable practiſes, but ſays not one ſyllable of that horrid crime, that is mention'd by *Epiphanius*. *Hippolytus*'s book againſt the hereticks is loſt; and *Juſtin*'s has met with the ſame fate: however in one of his Apologies, *Juſtin* makes an open declaration; which clear's (as far as his own knowledge went) all hereticks in general, from the imputation of Infanticide, and eating of human fleſh (*r*).

3. But to put the matter beyond diſpute. What *Epiphanius* ſays of the *Gnoſticks*, evidently relates, not to the primitive *Gnoſticks*, the *Simonians*, *Menandrians*, *Baſilidians*, *Carpocratians*, &c. but to thoſe of his own time (*s*). Nay he expreſly ſays, that thoſe *Gnoſticks* endeavour'd to ſeduce him, in his youth. So far then were thoſe *Gnoſtick* hereticks, from giving birth to the ſecond calumny againſt the Chriſtians; that 'tis very probable, the calumny was dropp'd, and almoſt forgotten, before *Epiphanius*'s time; and before the riſe of that hereſy, which he deſcribes, and confutes.

(*r*) *Apol.* 2.

(*s*) Καὶ εἰ μὲν παρεληλύθει ἡ τοιαύτη αἵρεσις, καὶ ἀκέπ ἦν ἐν τῷ βίῳ, ἀγαθὸν ἦν τοῦτο σιγᾶν, καὶ μήτε ὅλως δεῖ ἀυτῆς εἰπεῖν. ἐπειδὴν δὲ καὶ ἔστι, καὶ περίπεται. κ. τ. λ. *p.* 97. Vide p. 99, 100.

It

It is said of *Simon* the heretick, the vilest wretch that the Christian world was ever acquainted with, that he kill'd a little boy, and hung up his picture in his bed-chamber; and by some unaccountable charms, oblig'd the soul of the murder'd child, to assist him in his diabolical operations, and magical delusions (*t*). St. *Luke's* account of him is, that *for a long time he had bewitch'd the people of Samaria with sorceries, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, this man is the great power of God* (*u*). The antients represent him as a wonderful magician, and he is said to have done many surprizing things, by his infernal art; and since murdering of Infants was a common, and prevailing practice, amongst the pagan sorcerers, and necromancers, as I shall shew by and by, the above mention'd story of *Simon*, carries the greater appearance of probability.

But still it is liable to as great exceptions, as that of the *Gnosticks*, related by *Epiphanius:* for there is not any one author of credit, that mentions it, even whilst we have many, and particular accounts of *Simon's* blasphemies, his errors, and impurities. The story, as far as I remember, is no where to be met with, but in the *Recognitions* of *Clement*, the *Clementine Homilies*, and the

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(*t*) *Recognit. Clem. L. 2. cap. 13. Epit. de Gestis Petri cap. 27. Homil. Clement. L. 2. cap. 26.*

(*u*) *Acts* 8. 9, 10.

Epitome

Epitome of the *Acts of Peter*: all of which, ſeem to be the forgery, of one, and the ſame Impoſtor. They contain ſo many things, that are unworthy of *Clement*, the famous Biſhop of *Rome*, that the learned have unanimouſly pronounc'd them ſpurious: and whoever was the author of them, he ſeems to have been of a claſs, even below the compiler of the eight books of Apoſtolical *Conſtitutions*, and cou'd neither be a companion of the Apoſtles, nor one that liv'd in the Apoſtolick age (*w*).

Since then we have no good authority, for deriving the occaſion of the ſecond antichriſtian calumny, from the hereticks: let us ſee in the next place, whether the inhuman cruelties, practis'd by the heathens themſelves, might not be the true, and original foundation, of that unjuſt charge againſt the primitive Chriſtians, contain'd in the ſecond article of accuſation.

To kill Infants, and to drink human blood, was the practice in ſeveral parts of the heathen world: and this was done upon ſeveral accounts, in making of publick, or private leagues of friendſhip. in forming of conſpiracies. in ſacrificing to the pagan deities. in necromancy, and other magical operations. It was a cuſtom amongſt the *Scythians*, a people famous for friendſhip, when they mutually engag'd to live in peace, and amity

(*w*) Vide *Cotelerii præfat. ad Recognit. &c. Grab. Spicileg.*

with

with one another; to drink one anothers blood: and this was look'd upon as a moſt ſure, and ſacred pledge of an inviolable friendſhip (*x*). *Tacitus*, ſpeaking of a league that was made, between *Rhadamiſtus*, and his uncle, the king of *Armenia*, acquaints us, that it was an uſual ceremony, when kings entred into a treaty, or league, to joyn their right hands, and tie their thumbs cloſe together; and then to let out the blood, confin'd in the ends of their thumbs; which they afterwards drank (*y*). The ſame things are reported of the *Medes*, and *Lydians*, by *Herodotus*, and of the *Scythians* too; with this additional ceremony; that before they drank the blood, they dipp'd the points of their ſwords in it (*z*).

In conſpiracies too the perſons concern'd us'd to drink human blood; and with horrid oaths, and imprecations promiſe ſecrecy, and their utmoſt aſſiſtance, in carrying on the grand deſign. Thus when *Sariaſter* conſpir'd againſt his father, the king of *Armenia*, he oblig'd his friends, and accomplices in the Treaſon, to drink one anothers blood (*a*). *Salluſt* tells a remarkable ſtory of *Catiline*, who was at the head of a conſpiracy,

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(*x*) Ἐνλεμόντες, ἅπαξ τὸς δακλύλυς, ἐνσαλάξωμεν τὸ αἷμα εἰς κύλικα, καὶ τὰ ξίφη ἄκρα βάψαντες, ἅμα ἀμφότεροι ἐπισχόμενοι, πίωμεν, ἐκ ἔστιν ὅ τι μὴ τῶδ' ἡμᾶς διαλύσειεν ἄν. *Lucian. Toxaris vel amicitia. p.* 67.

(*y*) *L.* 12. *Annal.*

(*z*) *L.* 1. *cap.* 74. *L.* 4. *cap.* 70. vide *L.* 3. *cap* 8.

(*a*) *Valer. Max. L.* 9. *cap.* 11.

that

that might have prov'd fatal to the Roman liberties, had it not been for the great wisdom, vigilance, and dexterity of the consul *Cicero*. The historian, in that beautiful description of the *Catilinarian* war, says, it was reported of *Catiline*, that at a meeting of the conspirators, he handed about a cup full of Wine, and human blood mix'd: and when all his friends had tasted of it, he told them, his intention by doing this, was to engage them, to act with the greater heartiness, and fidelity, in the cause they were imbarqu'd in (*b*). This story is alluded to by *Tertullian*, and some other Apologists for the Christians (*c*): and is told by *Dion Cassius*, with new, and surprising circumstances. he says (*d*), what the conspirators drank, was the blood of a child, kill'd for that very purpose, by *Catiline*; and that he oblig'd his companions, and partners in the treason, to swear upon the bowels of the murder'd infant. *Statius*, and some others, speak of conspiracies, that were carried on in the same method (*e*): which gives a greater appearance of probability to the relation of the above mention'd historian.

(*b*) *Bell. Catilin. cap.* 22. *L. Flor. L.* 4. *cap.* 1.

(*c*) Nescio quid & sub Catilina deguſtatum. *Apol. cap.* 9. *Min. Fel. p.* 297.

(*d*) *Hist. Rom. l.* 37. *p.* 43. vide *Plutarch. in vit. Ciceron.*

(*e*) *L.* 5. *Thebaidos.* vide *Alex. ab Alex. L.* 5. *cap.* 3.

Many

Many of the altars, dedicated to the pagan deities, were polluted with human blood; and great numbers, both of infants, and adult perſons, were offer'd up in ſacrifice, by the ignorant and ſuperſtitious heathens, to *Saturn*, *Jupiter*, *Mercury*, *Diana*, &c. At the funeral of any conſiderable perſon, human ſacrifices were very common: and to this barbarous uſage, *Homer* alludes (*f*), when he makes his *Hero*, *Achilles*, ſlay twelve captives, at the funeral of *Patroclus*. In imitation of this example, *Æneas*, ſacrific'd eight young men, at the funeral of *Pallas* (*g*). The antient *Gauls* were of opinion, that human Sacrifices, were the moſt acceptable to the Gods of any; and therefore, when they were viſited with ſickneſs, or any other calamity, they vow'd to ſacrifice, either themſelves, or ſome other men (*h*). The *Tauri*, ſacrific'd to *Diana*, all the ſtrangers they could catch (*i*). *Ariſtomenes* the *Meſſenian*, at one ſacrifice to *Jupiter*, ſlew three hundred men: one of whom was *Theopompus*, king

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(*f*) *Iliad.* 21. *ver.* 27.

(*g*) ——————————Sulmone creatos
Quatuor hic Juvenes; totidem, quos educat Ufens,
Viventes rapit, Inferias quos immolet umbris,
Captivoq; rogi perfundat ſanguine flammas.
Virgil. Æneid. L. 10. *verſ.* 517.

(*h*) *Cæſar de Bello Gallico. L.* 6. *Cicero pro Fonteio. Pompon. Mela L.* 3. *Euſeb. Præp. Evangel. L.* 3. *cap.* 17. *Tertul. Apol. cap.* 9. *Plin. Nat. Hiſt. L.* 30. *cap.* 1.

(*i*) *Lucian. Toxar. Euſeb. præp. Evangel. L.* 9. *& Curt. L.* 4. *Clem. Alex. Cohortat. ad Græcos. p.* 36.

of

of the *Lacedemonians* (*k*). The antient *Britons*, *Germans*, *Cretians*, with a great many others, are said to have been guilty of this most inhuman, and infamous practice (*l*). But as for infanticide, the *Carthaginians* exceeded all the people in the world besides: they sacrific'd their own children to *Saturn*, and those that had none, were oblig'd to buy some of the poorer sort. When they were overcome by *Agathocles*, king of *Sicily*, they imagin'd their God *Saturn* was very angry with them; and to appease his wrath, they murder'd at one sacrifice, two hundred noblemens sons (*m*).

This deviliſh cuſtom of ſacrificing the human race, was not peculiar to thoſe people, who were accounted rude, and barbarous; but it was to be met with amongſt thoſe, who had made conſiderable emprovements in all the politer arts. After the fatal battle at *Cannæ*, the people of *Rome*, under the greateſt conſternation, and expecting the conquering enemy at their gates, buried four people alive, by way of ſacrifice to the infernal Gods (*n*). *Pliny* mentions a decree of the Roman ſenate, made about an hundred years before the birth of our Saviour, which prohibited human ſacrifices: and

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(*k*) *Clem. Alex. Cohortat. ad Græcos. p.* 36.

(*l*) *Plin. Nat. Hiſt. L.* 30. *cap.* 1. *Tacit. Annal. L.* 14. *de Moribus German. Diodor. Sic. L.* 5.

(*m*) *Peſcenius Feſtus apud Lactant. l.* 1. *cap.* 21. *Cyril. adv. Julian. l.* 4. *Auguſtin. de Civitate Dei. l.* 7. *cap.* 19. *Platonis Minos. ſive de lege.*

(*n*) *Livii Hiſt. l.* 22.

tells

tells us, how much the world was beholden to the Romans, for rooting out thoſe monſters, that accounted human ſacrifices a commendable, and religious action; and the eating of human fleſh, a very wholſom thing (*o*). But this decree, after all thoſe mighty boaſts of *Pliny*, had no very great effect: for 'tis certain, that abominable practice prevail'd very much, even until the reign of the emperor *Adrian* (*p*). Nor did it then entirely ceaſe: for, ſeveral years afterwards, we find it was a cuſtom, even in *Rome*, the imperial city; to ſacrifice a man, at one of their annual feſtivals, to *Jupiter Latiaris* (*q*). Nor is there any reaſon to queſtion the authority, of the Chriſtian Apologiſts in this matter; or to cenſure them, for being too ſevere, in retorting the charge of infanticide upon the pagans: ſince the facts they mention, are principally taken from the gentile hiſtorians, and atteſted by thoſe, who were very far from carrying any prejudices, in favour of Chriſtianity (*r*).

Infants, and little children, were alſo murder'd by the magicians, and necromancers of old: and as the pagan *Haruſpices*, or *Extiſpices*, pretended to

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(*o*) *Nat. Hiſt. l.* 30. *cap.* 1.

(*p*) *Lactant. l.* 1. *cap.* 21. *Porphyr. de Abſtinentia l.* 2. *cap.* 56. *Euſeb. de laude Conſtant. p.* 659.

(*q*) Hodieq; ab ipſis Latiaris Jupiter homicidio colitur; & quod Saturni filio dignum eſt, mali & noxii hominis ſanguine ſaginatur. *Min. Fel. p.* 297. *Tertul. adv. Gnoſtic. cap.* 7.

(*r*) Vide *Porphyr. de Abſtinentia. cap.* 54, 55, 56, 57. *l.* 2.

gueſs

gueſs at the ſucceſs of any action; and to diſcover future events, by looking into the entrails of beaſts; ſo the magicians conſulted the Gods, *in fibris infantum*, by looking into the bowels of infants (*s*). *Dionyſius* of *Alexandria*, in one of his epiſtles (*t*), ſpeaks of an *Ægyptian* conjurer, in the reign of *Valerian*, who in his magical operations, ripp'd up new born infants, and examin'd their bowels. The ſame things are reported of *Maxentius*, who was a bigotted obſerver of all the pagan ſuperſtitions (*u*). In *Julian*'s reign, many children, of both ſexes, were murder'd by magicians, at *Athens*, *Alexandria*, and ſeveral other places (*w*). And long before that time, that horrid and infernal practice is mention'd, by *Juſtin Martyr* (*x*), *Horace* (*y*), and ſome others.

By theſe inſtances that I have given, it evidently appears, that the pagan uſages are very well deſcrib'd, in the ſecond antichriſtian calumny; and that whatever reaſon there was, for faſtening the charge of infanticide upon the primitive Chriſtians,

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(*s*) *Porphyr. de Abſtinentia ab Animal. l.* 2. *cap.* 51. *Juſtin. Apol.* 1. *D. Caſſ. l.* 73. *p.* 838.

(*t*) *Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccleſ. l.* 7. *cap.* 10. vide *l.* 8. *cap.* 14.

(*u*) *Euſeb. Vita Conſtant. l.* 1. *cap.* 36.

(*w*) Καὶ πλείας τινας συνίσασαν, ὡς ἢ σπλαγχνοσκοπούμενοι παῖδας καθαύειν ἀφθόγους, ἄῤῥενας ἢ θηλείας, ἢ ἐξ σαρκῶν ἀπογένεσθαι. *Socrat. Hiſt. Eccleſ. l.* 3. *cap.* 13.

(*x*) *Apol.* 1.

(*y*) *Epod.* 5. *In Canidiam Veneficam.* Vide *Juvenal. Sat.* 6. *verſ.* 553.

it

it may with juſtice enough, be retorted upon the heathens themſelves. And ſince 'tis very natural, for men to form a judgment of other mens behaviour, by their own; and from a parity of circumſtances, to conclude a likeneſs of action; it will be no extravagant, and improbable ſuppoſition, if we make the inhuman cruelties of the heathens, the genuine, and original foundation of the ſecond calumny, againſt the Chriſtians.

This conjecture is ſupported by two very plauſible reaſons. Firſt, The Chriſtians were accounted a pack of infamous conſpirators, and ſworn enemies to *Cæſar*. At their night meetings, they were ſuſpected to be plotting againſt the empire, and forming of villainous confederacies againſt the publick peace. They were ſuppos'd to carry a mortal hatred towards all men, excepting thoſe of their own perſuaſion; and to promote the intereſt of the Chriſtian ſociety, by the vileſt, clandeſtine arts. Now if it was a cuſtomary thing amongſt the pagan conſpirators, to drink human blood, in order to engage one another, to act with greater ſecrecy, and fidelity; why may we not ſuppoſe, that the heathens accus'd the Chriſtians of infanticide, and of drinking human blood, only becauſe they look'd upon them as traitors, and conſpirators? Nay it can ſcarce be imagin'd, why they ſhou'd think, that the Chriſtians were conſpirators, without ſuppoſing at the ſame time, that they took

the ſame precautions, and purſu'd the ſame methods, that other conſpirators did.

Secondly, The Chriſtians were repreſented as ſorcerers, and magicians; and even our bleſſed Lord, and his Apoſtles did not eſcape that cenſure (z): And ſince we have undeniable proof, that the heathen magicians were guilty of infanticide, there is ſtill the greater probability, that the ſecond calumny was originally deriv'd, from the ſcandalous practices, amongſt the heathens themſelves.

But tho' the imputation of infanticide, and of drinking human blood, may thus be accounted for, with a tolerable ſemblance of reaſon, and truth; yet it may be queſtion'd, whether the charge of Ανθρωποφαγία, of eating human fleſh, cou'd be derived from the ſame cauſe. For, that the magicians us'd to eat of thoſe infants, that they murder'd, is mention'd by none (as far as I remember) excepting *Socrates*; whoſe authority, as an hiſtorian, may be very good; yet ſtill, what he ſpeaks of, is very little to the purpoſe, as being done ſo late, as the reign of the Apoſtate *Julian*. Beſides, what is reported of the conſpirators of old, and particularly of *Catiline*, and his companions, looks very much like a fable: or admitting that infanticide was the practice amongſt them; it is to the laſt

(z) *Origen. contra Celſ. l.* 1. *p.* 30. *Arnob. adv. Gentes. l.* 1. *p.* 25.

degree

degree improbable, that they tasted of the flesh of the murder'd infants; and especially, since this circumstance is omitted by some of the gentile historians, and the conspirators are said only to have touch'd (*a*) the bowels of the infant, and upon them to have sworn mutual fidelity, and assistance.

In answer to this difficulty, let it be observ'd; that it makes no difference in this matter, whether those accounts of the pagan conspirators were true, or false: any senseless tale, tho' never so ill grounded, was enough to give the gentiles a handle to traduce the Christians. The eating of human flesh was charg'd upon several of the heathens (*b*); and by some upon the *Catilinarian* conspirators (*c*). Now whatever foundation there might be for these reports; 'tis certain, they were common enough, and credited by a great many people: and an ill natur'd, and implacable enemy to Christianity, who look'd upon Christians, as conspirators against all civil societies, might from hence take an occasion, to calumniate the innocent Christians. Whether this was the principal, or sole foundation of the charge, I will not pretend to determine. There's no absurdity in supposing,

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(*a*) Ὅρκον ὀμόσαι μέγαν ἔδοξε πᾶσι δεινὸν, ἀνθρώπου σφαγέντος καὶ σπασαμένους αἷμα, καθ' ἧς ἅπαντα μυσαρῶν ἐπήνεγκε. *Plutarch. in vit. Poplic.*

(*b*) *Herodot. l.* II. *cap.* 216. *l.* 3. *cap.* 99. *Sueton. in vita Neron. cap.* 37. *Plin. Nat. Hist. l.* 30. *cap.* 1, &c.

(*c*) Vide *Dion. Cass. Hist. Rom. l.* 37. *Plutarch. de Cicerone.*

that several things contributed, towards the forming, and propagating of every individual calumny. This however, I think, is evident; that the reports concerning the pagan cannibals, if they were not the original foundation of the calumny against the Christians, gave it at least a greater appearance of truth, and made it pass more currently: for how shou'd it enter into the head of any infidel, to lay so monstrous a charge? or how cou'd any one give credit to such abominable falsities, unless there had been some before, who had been guilty of the same practices (*d*)?

The Jews were formerly charg'd with a crime, that is pretty much of the same nature, with that which is contain'd in the second calumny against the primitive Christians. The story, as told by *Apion* of *Alexandria*, is this. When *Antiochus Epiphanes* plunder'd the temple at *Jerusalem*, he found in it a man lying upon a bed, with a table before him, cover'd with a great variety of the choicest meats. At the sight of the king, the man fell down at his feet, and with the bittereſt lamentations, implor'd his assistance. The king bad him declare who he was; how he came there, and what was

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(*d*) Nemo hoc potest credere, nisi qui possit audere. *Min. Fel. p.* 289. Hæc quo magis refutaverim, a vobis fieri ostendam, partim in aperto, partim in occulto, *per quod forsitan & de nobis credidistis.* Infantes penes Africam Saturno immolabantur. —— *Tertul. Apol. cap.* 9.

the

the meaning of so many dishes of meat upon the table. The man told him, he was a Greek, and had the misfortune to be taken by the Jews, and shut up in that place, with an intention to sacrifice him when he was grown fat: for he was inform'd, by some of the servants that brought him victuals; that it was a custom amongst the Jews, to sacrifice a Greek every year, to taste of his flesh, and swear an irreconcileable enmity towards all Greeks. And, the more effectually to move *Antiochus*'s compassion, he told him he had but a few days longer to live (*e*). *Josephus* has sufficiently bafflʼd, and expos'd the absurdity, and nonsense of this ridiculous tale: and has shown, that it came originally from the Greeks, who had a mind to justify the sacrilege of *Antiochus*, in plundering the temple; and his base perfidiousness, in invading *Judæa* in a hostile manner, without the least provocation from the Jews, and contrary to the most solemn treaties, and engagements.

Now this reflection upon the Jewish nation, is pretty near a-kin to that, which was thrown upon the primitive Christians: and since the heathens made little or no distinction between Jews and

(*e*) *Joseph. contra Apion. l.* 2. *Dion Cassius* speaks of an incredible number of Greeks and Romans, that were slain, and eaten by the Jews, in *Trajan*'s time. *Hist. Rom. l.* 68. *p.* 786.

Christians, especially whilst Christianity was in its infancy, one would imagin, that the second accusation against the Christians, came from that old calumny upon the Jews, mention'd by *Apion*. Besides in the same place, *Apion* censures the Jews, for swearing by the great God of Heaven, and Earth, that they wou'd shew no favour to any foreigner (*f*): which is agreeable to the character, that the primitive Christians had given them by their Enemies.

But on the other hand; if we consider, that what *Apion* reports of the Jews, was not their general character: that in this his censure he stands alone: and that 'tis probable, the calumny was but little credited; nor so much as heard of by many; we shall not have much reason, to derive the original occasion of the second antichristian calumny, from *Apion*'s scandalous reflection upon the Jews. Neither indeed, upon a strict comparison, are the calumnies exactly parallel. For the Jews were accus'd of sacrificing a man, after they had fatted him with dainty meats. The Christians were said to murder one of their own little infants. In *Apion*'s story, there is no mention of drinking human blood; which is a part of the

(*f*) Καταψεύδεται ὃ καὶ ὅρκον ἡμᾶς ὡς ὀμνύοντων τὸν θεὸν, τὸν ποιήσαντα τὸν οὐρανὸν, καὶ τῆς γῆς, καὶ τῆς θαλάσσης, μηδενὶ εὐνοήσειν ἀλλοφύλῳ, μάλιστα δὲ Ἕλληνι. *Joseph. contra Apion. l.* 2.

calumny

calumny upon the Christians. The intention of the Jews, by that sacrifice, was to perpetuate their enmity towards the Greeks: but infanticide amongst Christians, was said to be, by way of initiating members into the Christian society. So that upon the whole, there seems to be very little, or no authority, for founding the charge of infanticide, and eating of human flesh, upon *Apion*'s silly, and ridiculous story.

There is a valuable fragment of *Irenæus*, preserv'd by *Oecumenius* (*g*), that gives the best solution of the difficulty; and leads us towards a discovery of the true, and genuine source of that barbarous charge against the Christians, contain'd in the second article. *Irenæus* informs us (*h*), that the heathens apprehended the servants of some Christians, and compell'd them to declare, what evil they knew of their masters. The servants, willing to make a discovery, that might please the inquirers, declar'd, that they had heard their

(*g*) *Comment. ad* 1 *Epist. Pet. cap.* 3.

(*h*) Χειστιανῶν γὰρ καταχεομένων δῆλος Ελλησι συλλαβόντες, εἶτα μαθεῖν τι περὶ τούτων δύνατον ἐπέρρηπτον ἀεὶ Χειστιανῶν ἀναγκάζοντες, οἱ δῆλοι ἦσαν, μὴ ἔχοντες πῶς τὸ πᾶν ἀναγκάζωσιν καθ' ἡδονὴν ἐρεῖν, παρόσον ἤκουσαν ἀφ' ἑαυτῶν, πῶς θυέσιαν μυσάττεται αἷμα καὶ σῶμα εἶναι Χειστοῦ, αὐτοὶ νομίσαντες τῷ ὄντι αἷμα καὶ σάρκα εἶναι, τοῦτο ὑπέπτον τοῖς ἐπζητοῦσι· οἱ δὲ λαβόντες ὡς αὐτόχρημα τοῦτο τελεῖσθαι Χειστιανοῖς, καὶ δὴ τοῦτο πᾶσι ἄλλοις Ελλησιν ἐξεπίμπτουν, καὶ τὸς μάρτυρας Σάγκτον καὶ Βλανδίναν ὁμολογῆσαι διὰ βασάνων ἠνάγκαζον. Vide *Fragment. Iren. in Edit. Benedict. p.* 343.

maſters ſpeak of eating the fleſh of Chriſt, and drinking his blood, in the holy ſacrament. The heathens, who knew nothing of the nature of that ſacrament, imagin'd, that the Chriſtians did in reality eat human fleſh, and drink human blood: and upon this information, they founded the calumny; which they induſtriouſly propagated, and endeavour'd by tortures, to make the Martyrs, *Sanctus*, and *Blandina*, own the charge to be true.

It muſt be own'd that this relation comes from very good authority, and gives a plauſible, and natural account of the occaſion, and origin of the ſecond calumny: and as the Chriſtians were accuſed of worſhipping *Ceres*, and *Bacchus* (*i*), becauſe they ate, and drank conſecrated bread, and wine, at the holy communion; ſo 'tis exceeding probable, that the charge of *Anthropophagia*, was deriv'd from a groſly miſtaken notion of the ſacrament of the body, and blood of Chriſt. But there are two difficulties that want to be clear'd up. The firſt is this. The perſecution in *Gaul*, in which *Sanctus* and *Blandina*, and a great many others ſuffer'd martyrdom, was in the reign of *M. Antoninus*: about the year of our Lord, 176: but the ſecond calumny prevail'd long before that time. The fragment ſeems to have been taken from that famous letter, ſent by the churches of *Lyons*, and

(*i*) *Auguſtin. l.* 20. *contra Fauſtum Manichæum. c.* 13.

Vienne,

Vienne, to the Christians in *Asia*, and *Phrygia*: and since the fragment is expressly ascrib'd to *Irenæus*, 'tis probable, that he was the author of that celebrated epistle (*k*); being at the same time an eminent Presbyter of the church of *Lyons*, and not long after Bishop of the same church. Now that information, given to the persecutors in *Gaul*, was not the first occasion of that odious charge upon the Christians; nor indeed does *Irenæus* say any thing like it. The heathens long before, no doubt of it, had heard something of the holy sacrament; and from thence deriv'd an occasion to abuse the Christians. The servants were put to the rack, not for the discovery of Truth; but purely with an intention to accuse the Christians: and they made such a declaration, as they were directed to make; and such, as they knew wou'd please the inquirers: nay, in that famous account of the Martyrs in *Gaul*, we find, that the soldiers prompted the servants, and directed them what discoveries to make (*l*): by which it appears, that a gross, and imperfect notion of the holy sacrament, had given occasion to censure the Christians, before the persecution in *Gaul*, which was in the year of our Lord 176.

(*k*) Vide *Massuet. Editor. Iren. dissertat.* 2. *c.* 60. *p.* 106. *Vales. annotat. in L.* 5. *c.* 1. *Euseb. Hist. Eccles.*

(*l*) τῶν σφαλιωῶν ἐπὶ τοῦτο παροξυνθέντων ἀυλέος. *Euseb. Hist. Eccles. L.* 5. *c.* 1.

But

But tho' the charge of eating human flesh, and drinking of human blood, may reasonably be deriv'd from the aforemention'd cause; yet there remains a second difficulty, how to account for the charge of infanticide: for how eating the flesh of Christ, and drinking his blood, taken in a litteral sense, shou'd create a suspicion, that the Christians murder'd infants, cannot easily be conceiv'd: and 'tis therefore probable, that the charge of Infanticide, must have some other foundation.

There are some passages in the holy scriptures, that might, when grosly misinterpreted by the heathens, give birth to that detestable calumny. There were many remarkable sayings of our blessed Lord, hand'd about the world; and the sacred books of the New Testament, by some accident or other, fell into the hands of many an infidel (*m*). But what egregious blunders they committed, in citing the holy scriptures, *Celsus* is a remarkable instance; whose mistakes, and misconstructions are so numerous, and great, that one would almost suspect, that he had never seen the Apostolical writings (*n*). The passage, that seems most likely, to have occasion'd the calumny, is this.

(*m*) Inspice Dei voces, literas nostras, quas neq; ipsi supprimimus, & pleriq; casus ad extraneos transferunt. *Tertul. Apol. cap.* 31.

(*n*) *Origen. contra Celf. l.* 1. *p.* 47, 56.

Then

Then Jesus said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you (o).

Now suppose an ignorant heathen had accidentally seen, or heard of this passage: the observations that he would naturally make upon it, would have been these. 1. Whoever was meant by the son of man, he would take him to be a person distinct from the holy Jesus. 2. By son of man, he would not have understood a man, or an adult person: for, as every man is the son of some other man, he must have look'd upon this interpretation, as downright nonsense, or at least a foolish circumlocution: by *filius hominis* then, he would have understood a man's male child. 3. This command of eating and drinking flesh, and blood, he could not take in any other than a litteral sense. And lastly, he would observe, that this eating, and drinking, is made a necessary condition, of enjoying life, or happiness; and would therefore conclude; that it was a sacred, and initiatory rite, or sacrifice, amongst Christians. The result of these observations is this. The Lord Jesus Christ, under pain of his highest displeasure, commanded his followers (who religiously obey'd all his commands) to kill a male child, or infant; and to eat of his flesh, and drink of his blood: and this was

(o) St. *John* 6. 53.

to

to be done by way of Initiation; or to qualify men, for the enjoyment of that happineſs, which the Lord Jeſus promiſed to all thoſe, that were his true diſciples. This is exactly the ſubſtance of the ſecond calumny upon the primitive Chriſtians.

I cannot tell whether the baptizing of infants, which, 'tis generally ſuppos'd, was the practice in the firſt ages of Chriſtianity, might not occaſion, or at leaſt confirm the ſuſpicion of infanticide. 'Tis true, there is nothing in nature more different, than the initiatory ſacrament of baptiſm, by which infants, as well as others, were made members of the Chriſtian ſociety, and the pretended crime contain'd in the ſecond calumny: however it muſt be obſerv'd; that as infants by baptiſm were admitted into the Chriſtian covenant, ſo the infanticide charg'd upon the Chriſtians was ſaid to be their method of Initiation. *Cecilius* ſays, *de initiandis tirunculis, fabula tam deteſtanda, quam nota eſt. Concerning the initiating of novices, there is a ſtory equally deteſtable, and notorious* (*p*). Now ſince the infidels judg'd by appearances, and founded their accuſations upon trifling circumſtances, and very imperfect relations; might not the ſuſpicion of infanticide proceed, from the primitive practice of baptizing of infants? For, if the infidels had heard, that the Chriſtians ate human fleſh, and

(*p*) *Min. Felix.*

drank

drank human blood ; and had alſo heard, that infants were carried to the Chriſtian prieſt : they muſt naturally conclude, that thoſe very infants were ſacrific'd. And hence perhaps came that monſtrous fable of infanticide. To an Antipædobaptiſt, who fixeth the origin of Infant Baptiſm much later than the Apoſtolick age, this conjecture muſt appear groundleſs, and trifling ; and perhaps others will entertain the ſame ſentiments about it : but I think my ſelf oblig'd, whilſt I am inquiring into the original grounds, and cauſes of thoſe abominable reflections thrown upon the primitive Chriſtians, to ſet down every thing (being in want of ſubſtantial Evidence and authority) that carries any appearance of probability.

I have ſometimes thought, that the decree made by the Apoſtles at Jeruſalem (*q*), might contribute ſomething towards the propagating of the firſt, and ſecond antichriſtian calumny. The Apoſtolical decree enjoyns an abſtinence from blood, from things ſtrangled, and from fornication. Upon which a heathen would naturally put the following conſtruction ; if he had receiv'd any previous hints, that the Chriſtians were tax'd with eating human

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(*q*) *Acts* 15. 29.

fleſh, with drinking human blood, and with promiſcuous, and inceſtuous copulation. ἀπ' αἵματος, that is from drinking of human blood. καὶ πνικτῶν, from eating of human fleſh, or ſtrangled infants. καὶ πορνείας, and from inceſtuous luſts. The word πορνεία, tho' in its primary, and more obvious acceptation, it ſignifies fornication; yet does it alſo denote, every ſpecies, and degree of luſt, and impurity. In this ſenſe, it is us'd ſeveral times by St. *Paul* (*r*): and ſpeaking of the inceſtuous Corinthian, he expreſly calls his crime πορνεία (*s*). *It is reported commonly* (*t*) *that there is fornication among you* (πορνεία), *and ſuch fornication* (πορνεία) *as is not ſo much as named amongſt the Gentiles, that one ſhould have his father's wife.*

(*r*) *Theſſ.* 4. 3. *Rom.* 1. 29. Πᾶσαν ἁπλῶς τὴν ἀκαθαρσίαν τῷ τῆς πορνείας ὀνόματι ἐσεμνύνθη. *Theophylact. Comment. ad Rom.* 1. 29.

(*s*) 1 *Corinth* 5. 1.

(*t*) Dr. *Whitby*, in his notes upon this place, obſerves; that the crime of the inceſtuous Corinthian, cenſur'd by St. *Paul*, probably gave occaſion, to that vile reflection of unnatural Luſts, thrown upon the primitive Chriſtians. The learned Doctor builds his conjecture upon theſe words, ὅλως ἀκούεται, it is every where heard of, or it is a common report. But allowing that the report was got amongſt the Infidels as well as Chriſtians; which yet there is no neceſſity to ſuppoſe: I can think it by no means probable, that the crime of one ſingle Chriſtian, ſhou'd occaſion ſo univerſal, and ſo laſting a calumny; and eſpecially, when the offender was juſtly animadverted upon, by the ſeaſonable interpoſition of St. *Paul*; and thereby an effectual ſtop put, to that infamous practice.

If

If it ſhou'd be objected, that the Chriſtians paid the ſtricteſt regard to all the Apoſtolical directions; and that therefore it muſt be unreaſonable, to ſuſpect the Chriſtians guilty of ſuch crimes, as are expreſly condemn'd by the Apoſtles. The anſwer is, that a prohibition implies a preceding practice; and that an Apoſtolical decree wou'd have been unneceſſary, and impertinent, if none had been guilty of ſuch things, as are thereby prohibited. A candid and impartial man, wou'd no more have founded a charge of inceſt, and infanticide upon this Apoſtolical decree; than of treaſon, perjury, or any other great, and capital offence: but nothing but the fouleſt, and moſt diſingenuous practices, were to be expected from bigotted, and implacable enemies to Chriſtianity. They embraced every opportunity: emprov'd every hint, to the diſadvantage, and diſcredit of the Chriſtian cauſe. Boldly, and impudently cenſur'd, what they did not underſtand: and without evidence, or probability; and contrary to juſtice, or reaſon, tax'd the Chriſtians with the groſſeſt enormities. And whilſt they were under the influence of ſuch prejudices, and wicked diſpoſitions, we may I think, reaſonably ſuppoſe, that as there is ſome ſeeming reſemblance, between thoſe practices prohibited by the Apoſtolical decree, and the pretended crimes objected to the Chriſtians; ſo the heathens might from hence take a handle to calumniate the innocent Chriſtians, and derive that heavy load

load of infamy, contain'd in the firſt, and ſecond article of accuſation.

To ſum up what has been ſaid upon the imputation of infanticide, and of eating human fleſh. There is little or no reaſon to imagin, that the ſecond calumny was occaſion'd by the hereticks, in the firſt ages of the Church. For tho' the *Gnoſticks*, *Montaniſts*, and *Simonians*, are by ſome tax'd with infanticide, *&c.* yet in the moſt early, and authentick accounts of them, no ſuch charge appears. As ſeveral things were formerly branded with the odious title of hereſy, which, in my opinion, deſerv'd a more favourable, and ſofter appellation: ſo the hereticks themſelves (tho' juſtly charg'd with many errors, and impieties) have in ſeveral particulars been miſrepreſented, and abus'd.

Nor is there any better reaſon for deriving this calumny, from *Apion*'s idle tale of a Greek, that was annually murder'd, and eaten by the Jews. For that reflection upon the Jews, ſeems to have been ſtifled in its infancy: to have been but little credited; nor ſo much as heard of, by many: and beſides, this calumny upon the Jews, differs in many remarkable particulars, from that vile imputation caſt upon the primitive Chriſtians.

The fragment of *Irenæus*, ſeems to diſcover the true and genuine foundation, of the charge of *Anthropophagia*, of eating human fleſh, and drinking human blood: and 'tis not impoſſible, that the practices of the pagan conſpirators, and magicians

ſuch

(ſuch as the Chriſtians were ſlanderouſly reported to be) might alſo contribute, towards forming of the calumny. As to the charge of infanticide: whether it came from the necromancers, and magicians: or from a miſinterpretation, of the above-mention'd paſſage, in St. *John*'s Goſpel: or from the practice of baptizing of infants: or from all of them together, I leave to the learned reader to determine.

If we look into the character, and behaviour of a primitive Chriſtian, we ſhall readily diſcover, the foul injuſtice, and unreaſonableneſs of the charge of infanticide, and eating of human fleſh. Whilſt the heathens made nó ſcruple to drown, or ſtrangle their infants: to expoſe them to birds, and beaſts of prey: or to ſuffer them to periſh by hunger, and cold (*u*): the Chriſtians brought up their children with the utmoſt tenderneſs, and care. They were ſo far from complying with the cruel, but faſhionable cuſtom, of murdering their iſſue; that they look'd upon all attempts to procure abortion, whether they ſucceeded or no, as intentional homicide (*w*). *Nobis homicidium nec*

(*u*) *Min. Fel. p.* 289. vide *Athenag. Legat. Juſtin. Apol.* 1. *Dionyſ. Hal. l.* 2. *Plin. l.* 10. *Epiſt.* 71, 72. *Terent. Hecyr. Seneca de Ira. l.* 1. *c.* 15. *Plut. in Lycurgo.*

(*w*) Nobis vero homicidio ſemel interdicto, etiam conceptum utero, dum adhuc ſanguis in hominem delibatur, diſſolvere non licet. *Tertul. Apol. cap.* 9. vide *Athenag. Legat. p.* 38.

videre fas eſt (*x*). They accounted it a crime even to ſee a man kill'd; and though it was done, by way of puniſhment for capital crimes, and after a legal conviction (*y*). Barely to look on, whilſt a man was ſlain, they took for a ſort of approbation of the fact; and the ſpectator was in ſome meaſure involv'd, in the guilt of homicide (*z*). For this reaſon they never went to ſee the gladiators, nor any of thoſe bloody, and inhuman diverſions, that the heathens were much delighted with (*a*).

As for drinking of human blood, 'tis a moſt aſtoniſhing charge, and the groſſeſt lye that could have been invented. In obedience to the Apoſtolical decree, the firſt Chriſtians carefully abſtain'd from the blood of all animals: and from eating the fleſh of ſtrangled animals, and of thoſe that dy'd by any accidental hurt, or diſtemper. Hence the Martyr *Biblis* cry'd out, whilſt under tortures, *how is it poſſible, that Chriſtians ſhou'd eat little children, who are not permitted ſo much as to taſte the blood of any irrational animal* (*b*)? This the heathens were very well acquainted with; and therefore

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(*x*) *Min. Fel. p.* 299.

(*y*) Ὅυς γὸ ἴπασιν ἐδ' ἰδεῖν καὶν δικαίως φονεύσιμον ὑποπτεύσαντες, τόπων τίς ἂν καλείποι ἢ ἀνδρωφονίαν ἢ ἀνθρωποκτονίαν. *Athenag. p.* 38.

(*z*) Quod ſi intereſſe homicidio ſceleris conſcientia eſt, & eodem facinore ſpectator obſtrictus eſt, quo & admiſſor, &c. *Lactant. Epitome. cap.* 6. vide *l.* 6. *de vero cultu. cap.* 20.

(*a*) Vide *Theoph. ad Autolyc. l.* 3. *Tertul. de Spectac. de Idololatr. Min. Fel. p.* 343.

(*b*) *Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccleſ. l.* 5. *c.* 1.

amongſt

amongſt other experiments for the diſcovery of Chriſtians, this was one. They fill'd a bottle, or bladder with blood, and put it to a man's mouth, to ſee whether he wou'd taſte it, or no (*c*).

We learn from the Apologiſts, and others, that the firſt Chriſtians conſider'd the prohibition of blood, and things ſtrangled, as of a ſtanding, perpetual, and unchangeable obligation (*d*): and that this opinion, almoſt univerſally prevail'd, for a great many Years. Which by the way is ſomething ſurprizing; when the great Apoſtle of the Gentiles, had given a different determination of this matter; and had declar'd for the legality, even of eating things offer'd to idols, provided it was done without giving offence to a weak brother (*e*).

One of thoſe Canons ſtil'd Apoſtolical, inflicts a ſevere penalty upon thoſe, that preſume to eat blood (*f*): and the Greek church, which always had thoſe ancient rules in great veneration, even to this day, prohibits the eating of blood, and things ſtrangled; and condemns the contrary prac-

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(*c*) Denique inter Tentamenta Chriſtianorum, botulos etiam cruore diſtentos admovetis. *Tertul. Apol. c. 9.*

(*d*). *Tertul. Apol. c. 9. Min. Fel. p.* 300. *Clem. Alex. Pædageg. L.* 3. *c.* 3. *Origen. contra Celſ. L.* 8. *p.* 396, 397. *Lucian. de morte Peregr. p.* 597.

(*e*) 1. *Corinth.* 8.

(*f*) *Can.* 63. vide *Can.* 2. *Concil. Gangr. Can.* 67. *Synod. Truſt.*

tice of the weſtern churches (*g*). Nay in the Latin church, even ſo late as the beginning of the eighth century; we find *Gregory* the third, biſhop of *Rome*, prohibiting *Morticina*, or the eating of animals, whoſe blood was not extracted (*h*). Indeed St. *Auſtin* (*i*), and ſome others about his time, take the Apoſtolical decree in a different ſenſe: but 'tis certain, that for a great many years; blood, and things ſtrangled, were reputed unlawful food, and *Clement* of *Alexandria* ſpeaks the ſentiments, of almoſt all the Chriſtians in the world, at that time, when he ſays, ἐ γὰ θέγειν αἷμα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις θέμις. *It is not lawful for men to touch blood* (*k*).

By what reaſons thoſe worthy Chriſtians conducted their practice, I ſhall not now enquire. All that I would infer from hence is, the monſtrous injuſtice, and unreaſonableneſs of the charge. For, that the Chriſtians ſhou'd drink human blood, and at the ſame time religiouſly abſtain, from the blood of any irrational animal; when no imaginable reaſon cou'd be aſſign'd, but what would hold infinitely ſtronger, againſt the former, than the later: that the beſt of men ſhou'd eat the fleſh of

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(*g*) Vide *Balſamon. Scholia in Canon. Apoſtol.* 63. *Leon. Allat. de conſenſ. Eccleſ. Orient. & Occident. L.* 3. *c.* 14.

(*h*) *Canon. Pœnitent. Greg. tertii. c.* 30.

(*i*) *Contra Fauſt. Manichæum. L.* 32. *c.* 13. *Tom.* 6.

(*k*) *Pædagog. L.* 3. *c.* 3.

murder'd

murder'd infants; which perhaps was never done by any people in the world, or at leaſt, only by ſuch ſavage monſters, as were perfect ſtrangers to all religion, and the common duties of humanity: that Chriſtians, I ſay, ſhou'd be guilty of this, is ſhocking to common underſtanding. The heathens, 'tis ſaid, ſometimes drank human blood, for the cure of the Epilepſy (*l*): but it is not ſo much as pretended, that the Chriſtians drank it by way of medicine. In a word, the calumny carries its confutation along with it: 'tis a fable big with abſurdities, and contradiction; and whoever can give it any credit, may upon more probable grounds believe, that the Jews formerly here in *England* crucify'd infants: nay muſt be prepar'd for the belief of the moſt falſe, and romantick tale, that can poſſibly be invented by man.

(*l*) Quidam jugulati Gladiatoris calido ſanguine poto tali morbo ſe liberarunt. *Celſus de morbo Comitiali. L.* 3. *c.* 23. Vide *Plin. Nat. Hiſt. L.* 28. *c.* 1. *Min. Fel. p.* 299. *Tertul. Apol. c.* 9.

CHAP. V.

The charge of Atheism accounted for.

I Come now to the last of those three original calumnies, which I suppose, to be as old as Christianity it self, or very near it. The charge of Atheism undoubtedly commenc'd, as soon as there were any Christians in the world. For, whilst it was the practice, as well as the Duty of the primitive Christians, to maintain the unity of the Godhead: to explode the idolatrous worship, and condemn the Polytheism of the heathen world: they must unavoidably subject themselves to the imputation of Atheism, and impiety. If the pagans were sincere in their belief, they cou'd not forbear censuring those, as Atheistical and prophane, who vilify'd, and treated with contempt, their fabulous Deities.

Whether we suppose that the calumny came originally from the Jews, or from the Gentiles, there is little, or no difficulty in accounting for it. To an obstinate Jew, corrupted, and blinded with vices, and prejudices (as we find they were in our

blessed

bleſſed Saviours time) a Chriſtian muſt appear to be a prophane, and blaſphemous wretch. The Chriſtians indeed profeſs'd to believe in, and worſhip the one true God, the God of Iſrael: but how wou'd this be credited by the Jews; whilſt they obſerv'd them openly, and avowedly declaring, againſt circumciſion, and other legal obſervances; and running directly counter, to many of the Moſaical precepts? They thought it a crime, of a heinous nature in St. *Paul*, who perſuaded men *to worſhip God contrary to the law* (*a*). And St. *Stephen* was charg'd with blaſphemy, *againſt Moſes, and againſt God*; for ſaying, that this *Jeſus of Nazareth ſhall deſtroy this place, and ſhall change the cuſtoms which Moſes deliver'd us* (*b*). The generality of the Jews paid the ſame regard to the ceremonial law, as they did to the precepts of morality; and the eternal rules of right reaſon: and when they found, that the Chriſtians were for aboliſhing all thoſe legal obſervances, and carnal ordinances, they treated them as impious blaſphemers; as diſputing the authority of the great God of Iſrael, and in effect denying his exiſtence. In conſequence of this, immediately after our Lord's Aſcenſion, the Jews ſent meſſengers into all parts of the world, to give notice, that there was lately ſprung up a-

(*a*) *Acts* 18. 13.
(*b*) *Acts* 6. 14.

mongst them, αἵρεσιν ἄθεον Χριστιανῶν, *an atheistical sect of Christians* (c).

How the heathens came to charge the Christians with Atheism is obvious enough. *Justin Martyr* assigns the reason. He says, the Christians deny'd those to be Gods, that were generally accounted so; and maintain'd that the pagan worship was idolatrous, and not the worship of God, but of devils: ἐνθένδε κ) Ἄθεοι κεκλήμεθα *and from hence we are called Atheists* (d). 'Tis amazing to consider, to what a pitch of stupidity and infatuation, the heathens were arriv'd, at the coming of the Messiah. They fell down to stocks and stones, and gave a sham divinity, to the worst of men, and the vilest of creatures. There was scarce an Altar in the world, dedicated to the true God; tho' in him they liv'd, and mov'd, and had their being. Their corruption in manners, was equal to their ignorance: and whilst they knew not God, they were even strangers, to the common duties of morality: so that the world never stood more in need of a Saviour; and never deserv'd one less; than it did at that time, when the son of God was pleas'd to descend from Heaven, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

The Apostles, and their successors, had incredible difficulties to engage with, whilst they were

(c) *Justin. Dial. cum Tryph. p.* 235. 335.
(d) *Apol.* 1.

endeavouring

endeavouring to root out idolatry, and superstition, that were grown venerable by their great antiquity, and recommended by almost an universal practice. To turn men from the power of Satan unto God, who were influenc'd by the most obstinate and rooted prejudices, was a work, that cou'd never have been effected, without the assistance, and interposition of the omnipotent arm of God. The first planters of our holy religion, with surprizing constancy and courage, asserted, that what the heathens worshipp'd, were false, and fictitious deities. This mightily exasperated the pagans, who, to vindicate the honour of their Gods, pursu'd the Christians with infernal malice; and loaded them with the vilest reproaches. They were treated, as most impious innovators in religion. As enemies to gods, and men. And upon this, the charge of Atheism became a popular, and general calumny. *Crescens* the *Cynick* gives this character of the Christians (*e*). *Lucian* supposeth a Christian and an Atheist to be the same thing (*f*). A great multitude of Jews and heathens, at *Polycarp*'s Martyrdom, cry'd out with one voice, αἶρε τὺς Ἀθέους, *away with the Atheists*, meaning the Christians (*g*).

(*e*) *Justin. Apol.* 2.
(*f*) *Pseudomant.* p. 624. *Tom.* 1.
(*g*) *Epist. Eccles. Smyrn. de Polycarp. Martyr.* c. 3. 9. 12.

The

The heathens urg'd the charge of Atheism with the greater vehemence, because they observ'd, that the Christians ridicul'd their superstitious fooleries, and all their rites and ceremonies, that had been for a long time reputed sacred. The Christians had so great an abhorrence of an idol, that they omitted no opportunity of expressing it. By way of derision and contempt, they us'd to spit at the altars, and the images of the pagan Gods. This custom is alluded to by *Tertullian* (*h*); and 'tis mention'd by *Cecilius*, as an instance of the greatest impiety (*i*). *Celsus* charges the Christians with abusing, and striking at the statues of *Jupiter*, *Apollo*, and the rest (*k*).

The irreverence and contempt that the Christians shew'd to the idol temples, was also thought to be no little aggravation of the guilt of prophaneness, and impiety. The Christians look'd upon the heathen temples, as the habitation of devils: as publick stews, and receptacles for the most abandon'd prostitutes. But the pagans were extremely offended, to hear their temples call'd sepulchres: and when *George*, bishop of *Alexandria*, passing by a heathen temple, cry'd out, *Quamdiu*

(*h*) Ipsius fidei conscientiam perrogemus, quo ore Christianus thurarius si per templa transibit, quo ore fumantes aras despuet, & exsufflabit quibus ipse prospexit? *De Idololat. c.* 11.

(*i*) Deos despuunt. Rident sacra. *Min. Fel. p.* 77.

(*k*) *Origen. contra Celf. l.* 8. *p.* 402.

Jepulchrum

ſepulchrum hoc ſtabit? How long ſhall this ſepulchre ſtand? The enrag'd multitude fell upon him, and tore him to pieces; burnt his body, and caſt the aſhes into the ſea (*l*). Several of the Chriſtian writers indiſputably prove (*m*), that the heathen temples, were originally funeral monuments: and that the pagan deities were in reality dead men, whoſe bones and aſhes were depoſited in the temples: this made the heathens exclaim, *Templa ut buſta deſpiciunt. They look upon our temples, as monuments for the dead* (*n*). And when churches came to be erected upon the Martyrs graves, the heathens ſmartly enough retorted the charge, and call'd the Chriſtian temples τάφοι, ſepulchres; and the Chriſtians themſelves, οἱ περὶ τάφους, thoſe that frequented the cœmeteries, or graves of the martyrs (*o*).

When the Chriſtians became numerous, and powerful, and were under the protection of the civil magiſtrate, many of the pagan temples were utterly demoliſh'd. Then the charge of Atheiſm run high: the heathens were quite out of patience; and cou'd not mention a Chriſtian without rage,

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(*l*) *Ammian. Marcellin. l.* 22. *cap.* 11. *p.* 326. vid. *Socrat. Hiſt. Eccleſ. l.* 3. *cap.* 2.

(*m*) *Clem. Alex. Cohortat. ad Gent. cap.* 3. *p.* 39. *cap.* 10. *p.* 74. *Arnob. l.* 6. *p.* 193, 194. *Tertull. de ſpectac. cap.* 13.

(*n*) *Min. Fel. p.* 77.

(*o*) Vide *Julian. Miſopog. Libanii Orat. funeb. Eunap. vita Ædeſii.*

and

and invective. *Libanius*, *Julian*, and others (*p*), display their rhetorick upon this head: and *Eunapius* can neither keep within the bounds of truth, nor decency, when he mentions the demolition, of the famous temple of *Serapis* at *Alexandria* (*q*).

The great miseries and hardships the Christians underwent, help'd forward the calumny of Atheism; being esteem'd the just consequence, of some egregious impiety. The heathens ascrib'd all their happiness, and success to their piety towards their gods: and all their misfortunes, and disappointments to prophaneness, and negligence in their superstitious worship. The prodigious extent, and the flourishing state of the Roman empire, they imputed to this: that whilst other nations had their particular deities, the Romans worshipp'd all (*r*). 'Twas this that brought (as they foolishly imagin'd) the whole world in subjection to the Roman laws. 'Twas this that kept *Hannibal* from their gates, and the *Gauls* from the Capitol (*s*). Hence they blasphem'd the great God of Israel, when the Jews became a conquer'd people: when *their power was gone into captivity, and their beauty into the enemies hand* (*t*). And for the same reason, and

(*p*) Vide *Julian. & Liban. opera.*

(*q*) *Eunap. vit. Ædes. p.* 77, 78.

(*r*) *Min. Fel. p.* 49. *Valer. max. l.* 1. *cap.* 1. *Tertull. Apol. cap.* 25.

(*s*) *Symmach. Epist. l.* 10. *Epist.* 54. *p.* 539.

(*t*) *Min. Fel. p.* 94. *Cic. pro Flacco. Joseph. contra Apion. l.* 2. *p.* 1067. *Cyril. contra Julian. l.* 6. *Julian. Fragment. p.* 541.

with

with equal juſtice, they tax'd the Chriſtians with Atheiſm. They ſaw them involv'd in troubles, and difficulties: ſeemingly in a ſtarving, and forlorn condition: and tortur'd with the moſt ſhocking cruelties, and they drew this wicked, and blaſphemous concluſion, that the God the Chriſtians worſhipp'd, was not able to deliver them (*u*): and that their own Gods wou'd give them no aſſiſtance; ſince the Chriſtians had affronted them in the groſſeſt manner, by denying their exiſtence: by exploding their worſhip: inſulting their images; and by prophaning their temples, and altars.

This calumny continu'd much longer, than any of the reſt: nor is this at all to be wondred at, ſince it can ſcarce be imagin'd; how the Chriſtians ſhou'd at any time eſcape the cenſure of Atheiſm, whilſt there were any idolaters in the world. The charge of inceſt, and infanticide, muſt be dropp'd in time: ſince the infidels cou'd not but meet with repeated opportunities, of diſcovering the falſity of it: but ſo long as there were any people, that worſhipp'd a plurality of Gods, the charge of Atheiſm wou'd fall upon the Chriſtians. Hence we find in the fourth century the Emperor *Julian* (who attempted to re-eſtabliſh idolatry, and ſuperſtition upon their old foundation) calling the Chriſtian religion emphatically, τὴν Ἀθεότητα, *the Atheiſm*: and the Chriſtians, ſometimes *Atheiſts*,

(*u*) *Min. Fel. p.* 102, 103.

and

and sometimes *Galilæans* (*w*). It must be own'd, that the pagans were sincere in prosecuting the charge of Atheism; and that they really believ'd those to be the wickedest of monsters, who derided their gods: and this was the fatal source, of all those barbarous cruelties, that the primitive Christians met with. Long before the coming of our Saviour, it was reputed a capital crime to speak irreverently of the gods. *Socrates* was sentenc'd to die as an Atheist, by a decree of the *Athenian* senate. *Diagoras*, and *Protagoras* were severely punish'd, for deriding the sacred mysteries; and speaking disrespectfully of the gods: and *Anaxagoras* the *Clazomenian* suffer'd death, for asserting, that the Sun (which was generally worshipp'd as a god of the first class) was nothing but a red hot stone (*x*).

(*w*) *Julian. Epist.* 59. *p.* 203. *Fragment. p.* 528. *Misopog. p.* 90, 95, 98.

(*x*) *Joseph. contra Apion. l.* 2. *p.* 1079. *Tull. de nat. Deor. l.* 1. *Theoph. ad Autol. l.* 3.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

The charge of Κεφαλονολαλρεία, *or of worshipping the Head of an Ass accounted for.*

WHEN this Calumny took it's first rise, I cannot precisely determine: but 'tis evident enough, that it was of a much later date, than any of those that I have already attempted to account for: since neither *Justin*, *Theophilus*, nor *Athenagoras*, take any notice of it. *Tertullian* is the first that mentions it; and *Minucius Felix* (who wrote (*a*) about the same time) is the last. From whence one wou'd conjecture, that this silly and absurd calumny, was but of a very short continuance: and indeed who can imagine, that so stupid a fiction shou'd be kept up, and propagated for any considerable time? and especially, when it cannot be suppos'd, that any pagan could believe this charge to be true, without offering the greatest violence to his own understanding.

(*a*) Vide *Cav. Hist. Lit. D. Allix. dissertat. de vit. & script. Tertull.*

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Moſt of the calumnies were deriv'd from remote hints, and occaſional appearances: from foul miſconſtructions put upon the actions, and behaviour of a Chriſtian: but this one would take, to be purely the invention of ſome baſe, and malicious heathen. *Tertullian* ſpeaks of an infamous Gladiator, who expos'd a picture with this inſcription; *Onochoetes*, the God of the Chriſtians (*b*). The picture repreſented a monſter, that had Aſs's ears, a hoof on one foot, a book in one hand, and was cloath'd with a gown. Whether this occaſion'd the calumny, I will not ſay: but it is not improbable, that it had ſome ſuch foundation. An Aſs was generally accounted a vile and contemptible Quadruped. *Cecilius* calls it a filthy Beaſt (*c*). The Ægyptians treated it as an impure, and prophane ſort of an animal (*d*): and when they had a mind to deſcribe a wicked, and execrable wretch, they call'd him an Aſs (*e*). For this reaſon perhaps, the enemies of Chriſtianity invented the ſtupid fable of the Aſs's head; thinking they cou'd not better deſcribe the wickedneſs, ſtupidi-

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(*b*) *Apol. cap.* 16.

(*c*) *Min. Fel. p.* 83.

(*d*) Τὸν ὄνον ἐ καθαρὸν, ἀλλὰ δαιμονικὸν ἡγῶνται ζῶον εἶναι· *Plutarch. de Iſid. & Oſir. p.* 268.

(*e*) Τῶν πρωτικῶν βασιλέων ἐχθρεγινονῖες μάλιστα τὸν ὄχον ὡς ἐναγῆ καὶ μιαρὸν, ὄνον ἐπωνόμασαν. *Ibid.* Apud Ægyptios, aſini nomen objectare, magnum eſt ingerere probrum, quod Typhonis hoſtis Oſiridis colorem ferret. *Alex. ab Alex. l.* 4. *p.* 1200. *cap.* 26. Vide *cap.* 2. *l.* 4. *p.* 876.

ty,

ty, and folly of the Chriſtians; nor more effectually ridicule their religion, than by making the moſt contemptible of animals, the object of their worſhip.

Some are of opinion (*f*), that the firſt occaſion for this vile reflection upon the Chriſtian worſhip, was given by the hereticks; ſome of whom worſhipp'd a fictitious Angel, or dæmon, under the ſhape of an Aſs. The *Valentinians*, *Baſilidians*, and others of the *Gnoſtick* hereſy, had a ſtrange myſterious *Cabala* amongſt them; which they maintain'd, was unintelligible to every body but themſelves (*g*). From a Myſtical interpretation of ſtrange words; and a conjunction of certain numerical letters, they invented a great many heavens, and angels, or governours of them; to whom they gave different names, and different offices (*h*): and the generation, or production of thoſe ſeveral imaginary powers, is juſt ſuch a ſtupid tale, as the poetical genealogy of the heathen gods. The hereticks call'd *Ophiani* (from their worſhipping of a ſerpent) in conformity to the Gnoſtick ſcheme, had their ſeven heavens, and ſo many angels, or preſidents over them. In the firſt Heaven they plac'd *Michael*, in the ſhape of a Lyon. In the ſecond *Suricles*, in the ſhape of a Bull. In the third *Raphael* preſided

(*f*) Vide *Ouzelii Not. in Octav. Min. Fel. p.* 83.
(*g*) *Iren. contra hæreſ. L.* 1. *c.* 4.
(*h*) *Iren. L.* 1. *c.* 24. *c.* 30.

under the form of a Serpent. In the fourth *Gabriel*, who was like an Eagle. In the fifth *Thauthabaoth*, who had the ſhape of a Bear. In the ſixth *Eratаoth*, in the ſhape of a Dog. And in the ſeventh *Oncel*, or *Thartharaoth*, under the ſimilitude of an Aſs (*i*). There were other hereticks, who call'd the Governour of the ſeventh heaven *Sabaoth* (*k*). *Epiphanius*, ſpeaking of the *Gnoſticks*, acquaints us, that ſome of them gave to *Sabaoth* the ſhape of an Aſs: and others the ſhape of an hog: and for this reaſon imagin'd, that the Jews were prohibited the eating of hogs fleſh (*l*). This *Sabaoth*, according to the *Gnoſtick* ſcheme, was the creator of heaven, and earth; and of all thoſe angels and powers that were ſubject to his juriſdiction.

What has been ſaid of the *Ophiani*, is chiefly taken from *Celſus*, and confirm'd by the unqueſtionable authority of *Origen*; who made it his buſineſs to be rightly acquainted with the errors, and abſurdities of thoſe hereticks (*m*): and as to what *Epiphanius* ſays of *Sabaoth*, in the ſhape of an Aſs, *&c.* it carries the greater air of probability, as it is ſupported by the teſtimony of *Theodoret* (*n*). Nay

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(*i*) *Origen. contra Celſ. l. 6. p.* 295. vide *Spencer. Annotat.*

(*k*) *Epiphan. de Hæreſ. Archontic. cap.* 2. *p.* 293. *cap.* 5. *p.* 295.

(*l*) Φασὶ δέ τ Σαβαὼθ· ὁι μὲν ὄνε μορφὴν ἔχειν, ὁι δὲ χοίρε. *ac Hæreſ. Gnoſtic. cap.* 10. *p.* 91.

(*m*) *Contra Celſ. l. 6. p.* 296, 297.

(*n*) *Hæret. Fab. l.* 1. *de Archontic.*

Origen

Origen too mentions *Sabaoth*, as one of those fictitious gods, or governours (*o*): and what comes nearest of all to the calumny upon the Christians, we learn from the same author, that some of those governours were represented ὡς ὀνοκεφάλους, *as having an Ass's head* (*p*). From whence it appears, that what was charg'd upon the Christians in general, was in a great measure true, of some of the hereticks: and since it was an usual thing with the pagans (and what is loudly complain'd of by all the Apologists) to throw the odium of all heretical nonsense, and blasphemies, upon the whole Christian society (*q*): 'tis probable enough, that the hereticks gave a handle for the charge of *Onolatria*.

But the best way to discover the true, and original foundation of the charge, will be to inquire into those calumnies, that were formerly thrown upon the Jewish nation: from whence this upon the Christians was deriv'd. I speak this with the greater assurance, having *Tertullian* on my side (*r*); who is the more competent a witness in this case, as living at the time, when the calumny of *Onolatria* was first broach'd.

(*o*) *Contra Celsi. l. 6. p.* 296. Vide *Iren. l. 1. cap.* 30.
(*p*) *L. 6. p.* 300.
(*q*) *Celsus* blasphemes the Christian Name on account of the *Ophiani*. *Origen. contra Celsi. l. 6. p.* 294, 5, 6, 7, 8.
(*r*) *Apol. cap.* 16.

There never was any people under the heavens (excepting the primitive Christians) so grossly abused, and so shamefully misrepresented, as the Jews were, even by authors of tolerable credit, and reputation. There is scarce any one heathen writer, that mentions the Jews, without fastening some egregious falshood upon them: without some romantick and fabulous account of their laws, and religion, their manners and customs, their temple and their sacrifices. A Jew is always represented, under the odious character of an Atheist, and a declar'd enemy to mankind (*s*). One that was oblig'd by solemn Oaths (*t*), and by the express directions of *Moses* (*u*), to shew no pity, nor favour, to any stranger whatsoever. Whenever any prophane author undertakes to give an historical account of the origin, and antiquity of the Jewish nation, or of their deliverance from Ægyptian captivity, we are to expect nothing but some silly, senselefs tale, and the foulest of reproaches, and calumnies.

To begin with *Justin*, the Epitomizer of *Trogus Pompeius*. He says, the Jews came originally from *Damascus*, the capital of *Syria*, where *Abraham*,

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(*s*) Ἀπολλώνιος ——— ὡς Ἄθεις καὶ μισανθρώπους λοιδορεῖ. *Joseph. contra Apion. l.* 2. *p.* 1069. Vide *Tacit. Hist. l.* 5. *Diodor. Sic. l.* 34. *Eclog.* 1. *l.* 40. *Eclog.* 1.

(*t*) *Joseph. contra Apion l.* 2. *p.* 1087.

(*u*) *Joseph. contra Apion. l.* 1. *p.* 1058.

and

and *Iſrael* were kings. What he ſays of *Joſeph* being in Ægypt, is pretty conſiſtent with ſacred hiſtory, but the reaſon he gives for the children of *Iſrael* leaving the land of *Ægypt*, is a vile fable. The *Ægyptians*, he ſays, had a ſcabby diſtemper amongſt them; and fearing the contagion wou'd make a further progreſs, they baniſh'd all that were infected, along with *Moſes*, the ſon of *Joſeph*, who conducted this diſtemper'd, and miſerable multitude, for ſeven days together faſting, through the deſarts of *Arabia*, till they came to Mount *Sina*, where they met with refreſhment. There *Moſes*, in remembrance of their deliverance from famine, appointed every ſeventh day, to be kept as a faſt for ever: and becauſe he was afraid, leſt the nauſeous diſtemper amongſt his people, and the reaſon of their expulſion from *Ægypt*, ſhou'd make them odious and contemptible; he prohibited all commerce, and ſociety with ſtrangers: and what he did upon prudential reaſons, and to avoid infamy and reproach, became a religious obſervance (*w*).

What *Lyſimachus* ſays, is ſtill at a greater diſtance from truth, and a ſeverer reflection upon the Jewiſh nation. The Jews in *Ægypt*, in the reign of *Bocchoris*, he ſays, were ſorely afflicted with the Leproſy, and other diſtempers; and fled to the

(*w*) *Juſtin. Hiſt. l.* 36. *cap.* 2. Vide *Diodor. Sic. l.* 34. *Eclog.* 1, *l.* 40. *Eclog.* 1.

temples to beg their bread. The contagion spread, and a great mortality, and famine ensued. Whilst *Ægypt* was in this calamitous condition; King *Bocchoris* consulted the Oracle; and was answer'd, that the temples must be clear'd of those impure, and wicked wretches, the Jews: that the Lepers must be drown'd, and the rest of the Jews turn'd out a starving, into the Wilderness. The King religiously pursued the directions of the Oracle: he order'd the Lepers to be wrapp'd up in sheets of lead, and thrown into the sea; and the uninfected multitude he drove out by an armed force, into the wilderness. It was *Moses*'s advice to those miserable exiles, to march together in one body, till they came to some inhabited country: to shew no kindness, to give no wholsom advice to any mortal living, to throw down the altars, and temples of the Gods, wherever they met with them. The people submitted to *Moses*'s directions; and under his conduct went forward, burning and plundering the temples, till they came to *Judæa*: where they built the city *Hierosula*, so call'd from their plundering of the temples: but observing, that this name might occasion reproach, and perpetuate their infamy, they chang'd it to *Hierosolyma* (*x*).

Strabo,

(*x*) *Joseph. contra Apion. l.* 1. *p.* 1058. To prevent repetition, I designedly omit what *Manetho* and *Apion* say, about the *Israelites* coming out of *Ægypt*. But I cannot pass by *Apion*'s extravagant fiction, about the Institution of the Jewish

Strabo, an author of great judgment, and candour, makes some mistakes, in giving an account of the Jewish nation. He says it was reported, that the Jews were of an *Ægyptian* extraction, and that *Moses* was an *Ægyptian* priest. He takes abstinence from certain meats; circumcision, and other legal ceremonies, to be a superstitious degeneracy from the *Mosaick* institutions. He speaks of *Moses* with reverence and honour; and finely describes, what sentiments he had of the supreme Being. His successors too he mentions with applause, calling them *men truly religious* (*y*).

There can scarce be any thing imagin'd more extravagant, and silly, than *Plutarch*'s calumny upon the Jews. He had heard (*z*), that they religi-

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Jewish Sabbath. He says, when the Jews had travell'd six days together, they were seiz'd with Buboes, or Swellings in the Groin: and for this reason they rested on the seventh day when they came into the land of *Judæa*. And they call'd the seventh day *Sabbath*, because, in the Ægyptian language, *Sabbatosis* signifies Βυβῶνος ἄλγος, the distemper of the Groin. *Jos. cont. Ap. l* 2.

(*y*) *Strab. Geograph. l.* 16. *p.* 523, 4.

(*z*) This was very well known to the heathens, who made it the subject of prophane mirth, and drollery. Cum audisset (Augustus) inter pueros, quos in Syria Herodes rex Judæorum intra bimatum jussit interfici, filium quoq; ejus occisum: ait; melius est Herodis porcum esse, quam filium. *Macrob. Saturnal. l.* 2. *cap.* 4.

Et vetus indulget senibus Clementia Porcis. *Juvenal Sat.* 6. *vers.* 161.

Nec distare putant humana carne suillam. *Sat.* 14.

ously abstain'd from swines flesh, and made it a question, whether this abstinence proceeded from their adoration, or abhorrence of that nasty animal: and since they thought it as great a crime (as he supposeth) to kill that animal, as it was to eat it, he gravely concludes for their adoration of it; and adds, as the Jews worship an ass, that shew'd them the way to a fountain of water, when they were ready to perish with thirst in the wilderness: so they worship an hog, as being the inventer of ploughing, and sowing (*a*).

Tacitus throws many severe, and satyrical reflections upon the Jews. That celebrated historian, bigotted to pagan Polytheism, and superstition, grosly abuses, and misrepresents both Jews, and Christians; for which one of the Fathers (*b*) gives him the title of *mendaciorum loquacissimus, the greatest of liers.* After he has recited several fables, concerning the Origin of the Jewish nation, he proceeds to the reason of their banishment out of *Ægypt:* wherein he copies exactly after *Lysimachus.* When the exiles were in a desponding, and melancholy condition, *Moses*, he says, advises them to follow him as their guide; and to look for no assistance, either from the Gods, or from Men. The people consented, and went forward, with *Moses*

(*a*) *Sympos.* 4. *cap.* 5.
(*b*) *Tertul. Apol. cap.* 16. Vide *Famian. Strad. Prolus.* 2. *Lib.* 1.

at

at the head of them. But in their travels, they were so distress'd for want of water, that the whole multitude was upon the point of expiring. In this distress, *Moses* very luckily observ'd some wild asses, that were going to drink: he follow'd 'em, and found out great plenty of water. In gratitude to those beasts, that sav'd the whole multitude from imminent destruction, the statue of an ass, was afterwards erected, in the temple at *Jerusalem*. For six days together the people journeyed, and on the seventh, happily arriv'd at that place, where they built their city, and their temple: and because the seventh day put a period to a laborious, and miserable peregrination, *Moses* ordain'd, that every seventh day shou'd be kept as a Sabbath, or day of rest. The Jews won't eat of a hog, because that animal is very liable to the same distemper of the scab, or leprosy, with which the Jews were afflicted in *Ægypt*. There are several more calumnies in the same author, which it wou'd be too tedious to mention (*c*).

Dion Cassius very justly observes (*d*), that the Jews had no statue in their temple at *Jerusalem*; because it was their opinion, that Almighty God cou'd not be describ'd, or represented by any visible, corporeal appearance whatsoever. He mightily extols the beauty, and magnificence of the ho-

(*c*) *Hist. L.* 5.
(*d*) *Lib.* 37. *p.* 37. Vide *Diodor. Sic. l.* 40. *p.* 922.

ly

ly temple; and onely finds fault with it in this particular, that the outer courts had no roof, or covering, and were expos'd to the open air. Hence came that calumny upon the Jews, mention'd by *Juvenal* (*e*).

Nil præter nubes, & cæli numen adorant.

They worship nothing but the clouds, and the heavens.

When *Antiochus* prophan'd, and sacrilegiously plunder'd the holy temple; he found in it (as *Diodorus Siculus* (*f*) has it) a stone statue, representing a man with a long beard, riding upon an Ass, which he took to be *Moses*. *Apion* tells us, *Antiochus* found in the temple, the Ass's head, which the Jews worshipp'd, made of gold, and of a very considerable value (*g*). The same fabulous author tells a silly story of one *Zabidus*, an inhabitant of *Dora*; who by a cunning stratagem, stole this golden head out of the temple (*h*). *Damocritus*, an historian, charges the Jews, not only with worshipping the golden head of an Ass, but also with offering up human sacrifices to it: every seventh

(*e*) *Sat.* 14. Vide *Origen. cont. Cels. l.* 5. *p.* 234. Vide *Diodor. Sic. l.* 40. *Eclog. p.* 922.
(*f*) *L.* 34. *Eclog.* 1. *p.* 901.
(*g*) *Joseph. contra Apion. l.* 2.
(*h*) *Ibid.*

year,

year, he says, the Jews catch some stranger, whom they tear in pieces, and kill, and offer up as a sacrifice to the Ass's head (*i*). I have already taken notice of *Apion*'s tale of a Greek, that was annually sacrific'd, and eaten by the Jews: and to this short, historical account, of the calumnies, formerly thrown upon the Jewish nation, I shall onely add, what *Suidas* reports, about a Jewish custom, *viz.* when any one renounces Judaism, he's oblig'd to ride on a white ass about the synagogue, on the sabbath day (*k*).

The true, and fundamental cause, of all those foul, and heavy aspersions upon the Jews, will in a great measure appear, by making the following observations.

First, It is not at all to be wondred at, that the heathens committed so many mistakes, about the origin of the Jewish nation, and the Israelites coming out of *Ægypt*; when they had no history, but what was a great deal later than that of *Moses*. The Greeks, after all their vain boasts of antiquity, were taught the use of letters by *Cadmus*, the *Phœnician*, who liv'd (according to *Clement* (*l*) of *Alexandria*) eleven generations after *Moses*. 'Tis certain they had no exact history amongst them;

(*i*) *Suidas in voc. Damocritus.* Vide *Suid. de Juda.*
(*k*) *Suid. in Zenone.*
(*l*) *Strom.* 1. *p.* 383.

before

before the first Olympiad (*m*), when the world was above three thousand years old. Nay, if we may credit *Josephus*, their first historians, *Cadmus Milesius*, and *Acusilaus* (*n*), wrote but a little before *Xerxes's* expedition into *Greece*; which was about three hundred years after the first Olympiad, and a thousand years later than *Moses*.

Sanchoniathon, the ancient, and celebrated author of the *Phænician* history, by *Porphyrie's* own confession (*o*), was later than *Moses*. And if we may be allow'd to form a judgment of that historian, from his account of the *Phænician* Theology, preserv'd by *Eusebius* (*p*), he was an author too fabulous, and inconsistent, to be depended on.

Manetho, who seems to have been the forger of several calumnies upon the Jews, wrote his *Ægyptian* history, in the reign of *Ptolemy Philadelphus*, after the Greek translation of the Bible (*q*); and not three hundred years, before the birth of our Saviour. He undertook his history, with an intention, as some imagine (*r*), to confront the sacred history of *Moses*, and to depreciate, and vilifie its authority. He takes his fabulous account of the *Ægyptian* Dynasties, from inscriptions upon pillars,

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(*m*) *Justin. Mart. Cohortat. ad Græcos.*
(*n*) *Contra Apion. l.* 1. *p.* 1034.
(*o*) *Euseb. Præpar. Evangel. l.* 10. *cap.* 8.
(*p*) *Præpar. Evangel. l.* 1. *cap.* 6, 10.
(*q*) *Stillingfleet Orig. Sacræ. l.* 1. *c.* 3.
(*r*) *Ibid.*

and

and other records in the temples: and to advance the honour, and antiquity of his own nation, he begins the *Ægyptian* annals, a great many thousands of years, even before the creation of the world. *Berosus*, the author of the *Chaldæan* history, wrote about the same time with *Manetho*: and in a word, there is nor one historian, whether Greek, or Barbarian, that is comparable to *Moses* for antiquity: and when any of them attempt, to give an account of the Mosaick age, they have recourse to forgery, and fiction, to groundless, and romantick fables.

Secondly, The Heathens, even a great many ages after *Moses*, knew very little of the Jewish affairs: and their ignorance in the Jewish history, is to be imputed to these two causes. First, The Jews had little or no traffick, or commerce with other nations. They inhabited an inland country, and their cities were at a pretty great distance from the sea. *Josephus* observes (*s*), that the *Phœnicians*, *Ægyptians*, and others, who carried on a considerable trade by sea, were very well known in the world: whilst other people, that were not so commodiously situated for trade, were scarce so much as mention'd, and known to none, but their neerest neighbours. The same author further observes; that the Greeks, and Romans, tho' at no great distance, were for a long

(*s*) *Contra Apion. l.* 1 *p.* 1038.

time,

time, perfect strangers to one another: and that neither *Herodotus*, nor *Thucydides*, do so much as mention the Romans, tho' at that time, they were a considerable, and flourishing people.

The other reason, why the gentiles were so ignorant of the Jewish affairs; and guilty of such mistakes, and misrepresentations, was this. The Jewish religion enjoyn'd a peculiar way of life; and prohibited an open familiarity, and conversation with the gentiles: and the behaviour of the Jews, which was conducted by a religious principle, the heathens imputed to a hatred, and aversion that they bore to mankind. Upon this they made reprizals, and were resolv'd to hate, and persecute them in their turn. They represented them as declar'd enemies to mankind (*t*): invented the grossest fables, on purpose to blacken, and expose them; and pursu'd them with the most malicious reproaches, and calumnies.

Thirdly, The Jews were hated, censur'd, and abus'd for the sake of their religion; which was contrary (*u*) to the fashionable sentiments of the

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(*t*) Et Parentes malorum odimus, & est conditoribus urbium infamiæ, contraxisse aliquam pernicioſam cæteris gentem, qualis est primus Judaicæ superstitionis author, & Graccorum leges invisæ. *Quintilian. Institut. Orator. l.* 3. *cap.* 9. Vide *Joseph. Antiquitat l.* 13. *cap.* 16. *Diodor. Sic. l.* 34. *Eclog.* 1. *l.* 40. *Eclog.* 1. *Esther. Apoc. cap.* 13, 4, 5.

(*u*) Moses, quo sibi imposterum gentem firmaret, novos ritus, contrarioſq; cæteris mortalibus indidit. *Tacit. Hist. Lib.* 5.

heathen

heathen world; and condemn'd that Idolatry, that every where ſcandalouſly prevail'd. Religious differences always produce the fierceſt contentions, and the moſt dirty calumnies: but how muſt the heathens be provok'd, when the Jews, in contradiction to the common ſenſe of mankind, worſhipp'd the one great Lord, and Sovereign of the univerſe: and deny'd thoſe to be gods, *whom all Aſia and the world worſhipp'd?* This was look'd upon as a crime of the blackeſt, and moſt capital nature; and that call'd for the ſevereſt puniſhment. This entail'd upon the Jews, the odious names of Atheiſm, and prophaneneſs; and made *Pliny* give this character of the Jews, *Judæa gens contumelia numinum inſignis. The Jewiſh nation is remarkable for reproaching the gods* (*w*).

Fourthly, The Jews too often gave juſt grounds for cenſure, being guilty of ſeveral extravagancies, and follies, which were always emprov'd, and magnified by their enemies, the heathens. *Joſephus* gives the vileſt character of his own countrymen. Juſt before Jeruſalem was taken by the Romans, the Jews, he ſays, were the corrupteſt people under the heavens. They were arriv'd at ſuch an uncommon, and prodigious height of iniquity, that he believes, if the Romans had delay'd their coming againſt them; the earth wou'd have open-

(*w*) *Nat. Hiſt. l.* 13. *cap.* 14. Nec quidquam prius imbuuntur, quam contemnere Deos. *Tacit. Hiſt. l.* 5.

ed

ed, and ſwallow'd them up: or a deluge of water ſwept them all away: or a fire from heaven would have conſum'd them, as it did Sodom and Gomorrha (*x*). *Juvenal* repreſents the Roman Jews, as ſtrolling impoſtors, and fortune-tellers (*y*): ſome of them are accus'd of cheating people of their money, under a pretence of making collections for the ſacred treaſury at Jeruſalem (*z*). And in a word, their conduct in many inſtances, was far from being innocent, and juſtifiable; and the Gentiles, who were prejudic'd againſt them, made the crimes of particular perſons, a national reflection: and they were the more ready to credit every calumny upon the Jews, becauſe they obſerv'd that their conduct, in many things, deſerv'd cenſure.

Laſtly, As to the occaſion of that particular charge of *Onolatria*, or Aſs-worſhip, there are various conjectures. The Jews were ſaid to worſhip the head of an Aſs, becauſe *Moſes*, by the aſſiſtance of ſome wild Aſſes, found out water in the wilderneſs. Some therefore are of opinion (*a*), that

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(*x*) *Joſeph. de Bello Jud. l.* 6. *cap.* 26. *p.* 930. *cap.* 27. *p.* 933. *cap.* 37. *p.* 940. *l.* 7. *cap.* 30. *p.* 986.

(*y*) ——————— ære minuto,
Qualiacunq; voles Judæi ſomnia vendunt.
Sat. 6. *Verſ.* 547.

(*z*) *Joſeph. Antiquit. Jud. l.* 18. *cap.* 5. Vide *Sueton. Tiber. cap.* 36. *Tacit. Annal. l.* 2.

(*a*) Vide *Quæſt. Not. in Min. Fel. p.* 84. *Fuller Miſcel. l.* 3. *cap.* 8.

the

the following paſſage in Geneſis, gave the firſt occaſion for this calumny, upon the Jews. *This was that Anah that found the mules in the wilderneſs as he fed the Aſſes of Zibeon his father* (*b*). Now the word *jamim*, which our tranſlators render *mules*, ſignifies alſo ſeas, or pools of water (*c*): and according to this interpretation, the verſe runs thus. *Ana found waters in the wilderneſs, as he fed the Aſſes of Zibeon his father.* This latter interpretation ſeems to have the preference, becauſe in all other places in the old Teſtament, mules are call'd, not *Jamim*, but *Peradim* (*d*). But this conjecture is of little weight or ſignificancy, being built upon a ſuppoſition, that the Gentiles miſtook *Ana* for *Moſes*, which cannot, without the greateſt difficulty, be conceiv'd.

Another ingenious conjecture, and which is attended with greater probability, is made by the learned, and worthy author of the reaſonableneſs, and certainty of the Chriſtian religion (*e*).

" He obſerves, that the higheſt degree of ex-
" communication, among the Jews, being ſtyl'd

(*b*) *Gen.* 36. 24.

(*c*) Alii putant Jamim Maria appellata. Iiſdem enim litteris ſcribuntur Maria, quibus & nunc hic ſermo deſcriptus eſt. Et volunt illum dum paſcit aſinos patris ſui in deſerto, aquarum congregationes repperiſſe : quæ juxta idioma linguæ Hebraicæ Maria nuncupentur. *Hieron. Quæſt. in Geneſ. Tom.* 3. *p.* 101.

(*d*) 1 *Kings* 10. 25. 2 *Kings* 5. 17, *&c.*

(*e*) *Dr.* Jenkins *Preface to the* 2*d Vol. p.* 15, 16.

" *Shammatha*; which is the same with *Maranatha*: " *Sham* signifying Lord, as *Maran* also doth in " the *Syriac*, and other Languages: and *Atha* sig- " nifying cometh: *Atha* might either ignorantly, " or maliciously be mistaken for *Athon*; which sig- " nifies an Ass. And 'tis likely, that this calum- " ny might be first rais'd by some body, who had " been excommunicated, and turn'd Apostate, in " *Heliopolis*, or some other part of *Ægypt*; for " *Apion* was the first that vented it: and the Jew- " ish Temple in *Heliopolis*, being denominated " from its founder *Onias*, the High Priest, that " might give some countenance to this pretence, " as if it had taken its name from ὄνος, an Ass, " and had been from thence call'd ὀνεῖον.

This conjecture, especially the latter part of it, which derives the calumny from the similitude of the names *Onias*, or *Oneion*, and *Onos*, which signifies an Ass, is exceeding probable. For, *First*, This calumny did not commence till after the Jewish Temple was built in *Ægypt*, by *Onias*; which was about 150 years before the birth of our Saviour. This *Onias* being disappointed of the high-priesthood, fled into *Ægypt*; where he got so far into the good graces of *Ptolemy Philometor*, that he obtain'd a License from him to build a Temple, and a city, which from its founder was denominated *Onion*, *i. e.* the city of *Onias* (*f*). The place

(*f*) *Joseph. Antiq. l.* 13. *cap.* 6. *l.* 20. *cap.* 8. *de bello Jud. l.* 7. *cap.* 37.

assign'd

assign'd him was in the prefecture of *Heliopolis*, at about two and twenty miles distance from *Memphis* (*g*). He had also a large Territory given him by king *Ptolemy*, which he planted with Jews, and which was afterwards call'd Ὀνείου χώρα, the country of *Onias* (*h*). 2. *Apion*, an eminent Grammarian in the reign of *Tiberius* (*i*) the first spreader of this calumny (as far as it appears) was an *Ægyptian* (*k*). 3. There were many contests and disputes, between the *Ægyptians*, and the Jews that dwelt in *Ægypt*; which were carried on, in the most opprobrious, abusive language, and terminated frequently in blows (*l*). The Jews derided the *Ægyptians*, for worshipping of brute beasts: the *Ægyptians* recriminated, and charg'd them with worshipping an Ass, in their opinion, the most impure, and contemptible of animals (*m*). When they wanted just matter for censure, invention supply'd them with new topicks of slander. Upon a seeming resemblance between *Onion*, or *Onias*,

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(*g*) *De bello Jud. l.* 7. *cap.* 37.

(*h*) *Ibid.* Vide *Antiq. l.* 14. *cap.* 14.

(*i*) Vide *Suid. in Apion.*

(*k*) *Ibid. Joseph. contra Apion. l.* 2. *p.* 1063. For *Apion's* character, as an historian, see *Aul. Gell. Noct. Attic. l.* 5. *cap.* 14.

(*l*) *Joseph. de Bell. Jud. l.* 2. *cap.* 36. *cont. Apion. l.* 1. *p.* 1051. *l.* 2. *p.* 1062, 1065.

(*m*) Vide *Plutarch. de Isid. & Osir. p.* 268. *Alex. ab Alex. l.* 4. *cap.* 2. 26.

and *Onos*, an Ass; 'tis probable, they founded the calumny of *Onolatria*: and the charge that was originally levell'd at the *Ægyptian* Jews, or those that inhabited the Territory of *Onias*, became afterwards a general reflection upon the whole Jewish nation.

But to return. Whatever it was, that occasion'd those spiteful calumnies upon the Jews: we may with reason enough suppose, that the Christians were accus'd of *Onolatria*, purely because the Jews had been charg'd with it before. It is the opinion of *Tertullian* (whose authority I take to be very good in this case, for the reason mention'd above) that the suppos'd affinity, or relation between the Jewish, and the Christian Religion, involv'd the Christians under this infamous censure(*n*). It may, I confess, seem something strange, and surprizing; that the Infidels, towards the latter end of the second century, when I suppose, this calumny upon the Christians was first form'd, shou'd take the Jewish, and the Christian worship for the same thing. But in answer to this difficulty let it be consider'd, that both Jews and Christians were such contemptible, vile, and infamous wretches, in the eyes of the pagans, that they wou'd not

(*n*) ——Inde opinor præsumptum, nos quoq; ut Judaicæ religionis propinquos, eidem simulachro initiari. *Apol. cap.* 16.

condescend

condescend to give themselves the trouble of an enquiry about them. For this reason they continu'd in ignorance a long time; and basely, and impudently condemn'd, what they knew but very little of. *Lucian*, who wrote in *Adrian*'s time, or as some will have it (*o*), in the reign of *M. Antoninus*, *A. D.* 176, seems to confound Jews and Christians. He says of *Peregrinus*, τὴν θαυμασὴν σοφίαν τ῀ Χριστιανῶν ἐξέμαθε, σὺν τὴν παλαισίνην τοῖς Ἱερεῦσι κ᾽ γραμματεῦσιν αὐτῶν ξυγγενόμενος (*p*). *He learnt the wonderful wisdom of the Christians, by conversing with their Priests, and Scribes in Palestine.*

But admitting that the infidels knew exactly the difference between Judaism, and Christianity, which I dare be positive was false in fact; most of those cruel, and severe aspersions thrown upon the Christians, were known to be false, and groundless even by their bittrest enemies. They were as much a contradiction to the real, and sober sentiments of a pagan, as they were distant from truth, and from justice. The Jews had been accus'd of worshipping the head of an Ass: this the heathens must be very sensible, cou'd be no justifiable reason, for laying the same accusation

(*o*) Vide *Cav. Hist. Lit. Vol.* 1. *p.* 62. *Fabric. Biblioth. Græc. l.* 4. *cap.* 16.

(*p*) *De morte Peregrin. Vol.* 2. *p.* 593. κ᾽ περιφήτης, κ᾽ διατάξεις, κ᾽ ξυναγωγάς. *Ibid.*

againſt the Chriſtians : but this ſilly tale had render'd the Jews, as was found by experience, odious, and contemptible ; and therefore the pagans loaded the Chriſtians with the ſame charge, hoping that it would equally expoſe the Chriſtian name.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

The charge of Sedition, and being enemies to Cæsar *accounted for.*

THIS charge was the most artfully laid, and the most vigorously prosecuted of any, being the chief Engine, by which the heathens executed their inhuman cruelties. While they cou'd engage *Cæsar* in the quarrel against the Christians, they were secure of being assisted by the military power; and cou'd strip a poor innocent Christian of his substance, or murder him at pleasure. A heathen Emperour cou'd hear the Christians accus'd of many things with patience, and indifferency; but when they were tax'd with disloyalty, and disaffection towards *Cæsar*, this awaken'd his rage, and arm'd him with resentment. There happen'd a quarrel between the Jews, and the Greeks that dwelt at *Alexandria*: and both sides appeal'd to the Emperour *Caligula*. *Philo* was at the head of the Embassy for the Jews, and learnedly, and elegantly pleaded their cause. But when *Apion* on the other side objected, that the Jews refus'd to pay divine honours to the Emperour, and to swear by his

name (*a*), *Caligula* in a rage drove *Philo* from his presence: gave peremptory orders to have his own Statue set up in the holy Temple at Jerusalem: meditated revenge upon the Jews, which wou'd have been executed in a terrible manner, but that it pleas'd Almighty God to take this savage monster out of the world (*b*). *Pontius Pilate*, though a man of an infamous character (*c*); and ready enough to perpetrate any villainy, was unwilling to condemn the Lord Jesus Christ, that most perfect pattern of innocence and goodness, till the Jews represented him as an Enemy to *Cæsar* (*d*). And under the same representation, his disciples and followers met with unheard of cruelties, and exquisite Torments. Whenever the calumny was reviv'd, the persecution was renew'd, and thousands of Christians were sacrific'd to the mad rage of a barbarous Tyrant.

To support the charge of disaffection towards *Cæsar*, the heathens had recourse to several popular arguments; and put the vilest construction even upon the most innocent, and inoffensive conduct of the Christians. Their sacred assemblies being held in the night, gave their enemies a specious handle

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(*a*) Vide *Philon. Legat. ad Caium. Joseph. Antiquit. l.* 18. *cap.* 10. *Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l.* 2. *cap.* 5.
(*b*) *Joseph. Antiq. l.* 18. *cap.* 11.
(*c*) *Philo legat. ad Caium. Euseb. H. Eccles. l.* 2. *cap.* 7.
(*d*) *John* 19. 12.

to repreſent them as nurſeries of faction, and ſedition, and a confederacy againſt the publick peace. By the laws of the twelve tables, it was forbidden to hold any nocturnal meeting within the city (*e*); and there are ſeveral imperial edicts to the ſame purpoſe. We learn from *Pliny* (*f*), that *Trajan* prohibited the *Hetæriæ*, that is all private ſocieties or aſſemblies. *Cyprian* was told at his martyrdom, that the Emperours had commanded that there ſhou'd be no *Conciliabula*, or meetings in any place; and that none ſhou'd frequent the Cœmeteries, or burying places of the martyrs (*g*). It was objected againſt the Chriſtians in *Ægypt*, in the reign of *Valerian*, that they held unlawful aſſemblies (*h*): and afterwards we find the Emperour *Maximin* forbidding the Chriſtians to aſſemble at the *Cœmeteries* (*i*).

But tho' there were ſo many imperial decrees of this nature, the obſervation of which was enforc'd with menaces, and the utmoſt ſeverities; yet the Chriſtians were not to be terrify'd into a neglect of their duty, and cou'd not be prevail'd upon, *to forſake the aſſembling of themſelves together.* Upon

(*e*) Vide *Stewech. Not. in Arnob. p.* 110.
(*f*) *Epiſt.* 97. *l.* 10.
(*g*) *Vita Sti. Cypriani. Edit. Oxon. p.* 12.
(*h*) *Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccleſ. l.* 7. *cap.* 11. *p.* 257, 258.
(*i*) *Euſeb. H. E. l.* 9. *cap* 2.

this

this the heathens grew very loud, and outrageous in their clamours: they call'd the Christians a lawless faction, an impious conspiracy (*k*), a publick pest, declar'd enemies to *Cæsar*, and the Roman laws (*l*). It was the first calumny that *Celsus* threw upon the Christians, that they kept their private feasts of charity, in contempt of the laws (*m*). Their conventicles were frequently pull'd down (*n*), and sometimes burnt, together with all the people there assembled (*o*): and in a word, no punishment was thought too severe, for such capital offenders, and such execrable Treason.

Pliny, after a strict enquiry, owns the Christian assemblies to be harmless, and innocent (*p*): and what was done there is related by the Apologists, without any disguise. They tell the heathens, that they were so far from being enemies to *Cæsar*, or the publick peace, that they pray'd for all mankind

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(*k*) *Min. Fel. p.* 70, 81.

(*l*) *Vita Sti. Cypriani p.* 13. *Tertul. Apol. cap.* 2.

(*m*) *Origen. contra Celf. l.* 1. *p.* 4.

(*n*) *Arnob. adverf. Gentes, l.* 4. *p.* 152.

(*o*) *Lactant. de Juftitia, l.* 5. *cap.* 11. *p.* 258.

(*p*) Affirmabant autem hanc fuiffe fummam vel culpæ fuæ, vel erroris, quod eſſent ſoliti ſtato die ante lucem convenire, Carmenq; Chriſto, quaſi Deo, dicere ſecum invicem: ſeq; ſacramento non in ſcelus aliquod obſtringere; ſed ne furta, ne latrocinia, ne adulteria committerent; ne fidem fallerent, ne depoſitum appellati abnegarent. Quibus peractis, morem ſibi diſcedendi fuiſſe: rurſuſq; coeundi ad capiendum cibum, promiſcuum tamen, & innoxium. *Epiſt.* 97. *l.* 10.

in

in general; and more particularly for the happineſs, and proſperity of the emperours (*q*). But all this avail'd nothing, and con'd neither clear the Chriſtians from the imputation of diſloyalty, nor ſcreen them from perſecution. To diſpute any of *Cæſar's* commands, let them be what they wou'd, was an unpardonable contempt of his authority, and a Treaſon that merited his hotteſt indignation.

The Chriſtians kept their aſſemblies privately in the night, becauſe they were afraid of being inſulted by their enemies, and interrupted at their devotions. Beſides many of the poorer ſort had no leiſure in the day time, to attend upon religious exerciſes, being oblig'd to follow ſome ſervile, and laborious occupation, for the maintenance of themſelves, or families. But the heathens aſſign'd a quite different reaſon for thoſe nocturnal aſſemblies; and drew an argument of guilt, from the privacy of the Chriſtian worſhip. This is one of the ſtrongeſt arguments brought by *Cæcilius* to ſupport the charge againſt the Chriſtians (*r*). Why ſo much caution, and ſecreſy, if they do nothing they are aſham'd of? if men *love darkneſs rather than light, it is becauſe their deeds are evil.*

(*q*) *Tertul. Apol. cap.* 30, 31. *Cyprian. ad Demetrian. Athenag. Legat. Arnob. l.* 4.

(*r*) *Min. Fel. p.* 85, 90.

2. They

2. They were tax'd with diſloyalty, becauſe they refus'd to pay divine honours to *Cæſar*, and to give him ſuch lofty titles, as belong only to the ſupreme Being. Such was the degeneracy and infatuation of the heathens, that they treated the Emperours as Gods, and even ſome of the worſt of them, who were ſtrangers to every commendable quality, and ſeem'd to be ſunk below the dignity of rational creatures. Moſt of them had divine worſhip paid them, either when living, or dead: and thoſe who refus'd it, were ſure to have their modeſty rewarded with an *Apotheoſis* afterwards (*s*). Not long after our Lord's Aſcenſion, the worſhip of *Cæſar* was eſteem'd a neceſſary, and eſſential part of religion. This engag'd the utmoſt attention of a heathen, and commanded his profoundeſt reſpect, and veneration. The reſt of their fabulous deities grew in ſome meaſure neglected; and the old ſuperſtitious rites gave way to more faſhionable fooleries. They were more afraid of *Cæſar*, than of *Jupiter* himſelf; and accounted it a greater crime, to ſwear falſly by the genius of *Cæſar*, than by all their gods beſides (*t*).

(*s*) Dicavit Cælo Tiberius Auguſtum, ſed ut Majeſtatis numen induceret: Claudium Nero, ſed ut irrideret: Veſpaſianum Titus, Domitianus Titum: ſed ille, ut Dei filius, hic, ut frater videretur: Tu ſideribus patrem intuliſti. *Plin. Panegyr.*

(*t*) *Tertul. Apol. cap.* 28. *Min. Fel. p.* 283.

The

The Emperour *Auguſtus*, no doubt of it, had obſerv'd, how odious, and unpopular *Julius Cæſar* had made himſelf, by ſuffering divine honours to be paid him (*u*) : and this perhaps might occaſion that edict of his, whereby he forbad any one to call him *Dominum*, *Lord*; a title at that time appropriated to their Gods (*w*). *Tiberius*, a maſter in diſſimulation, and well ſtudied in the arts of popularity, wou'd not admit of this title (*x*): nay he gave orders, that none ſhou'd ſwear by his name; or build him any temples, or altars (*y*), which *Auguſtus* cou'd connive at (*z*), notwithſtanding his pretended modeſty, and humility. But afterwards the Roman emperours elated by flattery, and intoxicated with power, without any ſcruple, receiv'd divine honours of all kinds. *Caligula* was call'd *Dominus & Deus* (*a*), and *Domitian* gave orders (*b*), that no one ſhou'd preſume to mention him, but under thoſe titles.

(*u*) *Sueton. Jul. cap.* 76. *Dion. Caſſ. l.* 44.

(*w*) *Sueton. Aug. cap.* 53. Vide *Oroſ. adv. Pagan. l.* 6. *c.* 21.

(*x*) *Sueton. Tib. cap.* 27. *Tacit. Annal. l.* 2.

(*y*) *Ibid. cap.* 26.

(*z*) *Aurel. Vict. in Auguſto. Sueton. Aug. cap.* 52.
Jurandaſq; tuum per nomen ponimus Aras.
Horat. Epiſt. L. 2. *Epiſt.* 1.

(*a*) *Aurel. Vict. in Caio.* Vide *Senec. de Tranquil. Anim. cap.* 14.

(*b*) *Sueton. Domit. cap.* 13. Vide *Martial. L.* 5. *Ep.* 8. *l.* 8. *Epigr.* 2.

The

The primitive Christians refus'd to call *Cæsar* Lord, which gave great offence, and render'd their Loyalty suspected. They knew no difference (*c*) between κύριος Lord, and θεὸς God; and believ'd, that the former in its original acceptation denoted (*d*) universal sovereignty, and absolute dominion, which cou'd belong to none but Almighty God himself. *Dominus*, in *Tertullian*'s opinion, is the firname of God. He shou'd not scruple, he says, to call *Cæsar* Lord (*e*); but he wou'd do it in a common sense, and without intrenching upon the Prerogative of God. If *Polycarp* cou'd have been prevail'd upon, to call *Cæsar* Lord: to sacrifice (*f*), and reproach Jesus Christ, he might have escap'd with impunity. But the good old man with a decent warmth, and invincible courage, rejected the blasphemous proposal, and cry'd out, *Eighty and six years have I serv'd the Lord Jesus, and he has never done me any wrong: how then can I blaspheme my King, and my Saviour* (*g*)?

For several ages afterwards, the Christians had a scruple upon their minds, whether it was law-

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(*c*) Κἂν τε Κύριον ἀκούσωμεν, κἂν τε Θεὸν, ἐν τοῖς ὀνόμασιν ὅτι διαφορά. *Chrysost. Homil.* 14. *in Gen.*

(*d*) Κύριος δέ ἐστι, διὰ τὸ κυριεύειν αὐτὸν τῶν ὅλων. *Theoph. ad Autol. l.* 1.

(*e*) *Apol. cap.* 34.

(*f*) Τί γὰρ κακόν ἐστιν εἰπεῖν, Κύριε Καῖσαρ, καὶ ὀμόσαι, καὶ διαπύζεσθαι; *Epist. Eccles. Smyrn. de Polycarp. Mart. cap.* 8.

(*g*) *Ibid. cap.* 9.

ful

ful to give any man the title of *Lord*. For this reaſon the Greeks call'd their Emperours, and great men, not Κύριοι, but Κύροι: and the Latins *Dompni*, or *Domni*, inſtead of *Domini*. And hence 'tis thought came the titles of *Dom*, and *Don*, amongſt the *Italians*, and *Spaniards*: and *Sire*, and *Sir*, or *Cyr* (which are ſuppos'd to be corrupt abbreviations of *Curios* Lord) among the French, and Engliſh (*h*). The Jews were as nice, and ſcrupulous in this matter as the Chriſtians; and accounted it an abominable crime to call the greateſt man living by the title of Lord. We are inform'd by *Joſephus* (*i*), that a great number of Jews were moſt cruelly tormented, onely becauſe they refus'd to call *Cæſar* Lord; and maintain'd to the laſt, with wonderful courage, and reſolution, Θεὸν μόνον δεσπότην, *that God alone was their Lord or maſter*.

3. To ſwear by the genius, the fortune, or the ſafety of the Emperour, was reckon'd a moſt ſacred oath, and a teſt of loyalty, and affection to *Cæſar*. An oath by *Julius*, was a deciſion of all controverſies (*k*). It was an uſual thing to ſwear by *Auguſtus* (*l*), even whilſt he was living: and there was a deſign to build a Temple to his *Genius* (*m*) at the publick charge. There was not any

(*h*) *Spelman. Gloſſar. in voc. Dompnus.*
(*i*) *De Bello Jud. l. 7. cap. 37.*
(*k*) *Sueton. Jul. cap. 85.* Vide *Dion. Caſſ. l. 44.*
(*l*) *Horat. Epiſt. l. 2. Ep. 1.*
(*m*) *Sueton. Aug. cap. 60.*

oath

oath more common, or more ſacred with the Emperour *Claudius*, than that by the *Genius* of *Auguſtus (n)*: and it was eſteem'd a crime of a high nature, to prophane the name of *Auguſtus* by perjury *(o)*. *Caligula* put ſome to death, only becauſe they had never ſworn by his *Genius (p)*. After the death of his ſiſter *Druſilla*, of whom he was paſſionately fond, he made her a goddeſs, and ſwore by her name *(q)*. Nay he had a favourite horſe, that he invited to a ſplendid ſupper; deſign'd to make him *Conſul*, and ſwore by the ſafety, and the fortune of his horſe *(r)*.

This impious cuſtom, of ſwearing by the *Genius* of *Cæſar*, prevail'd a long time, as we learn from *Tertullian*, and *Origen*: and was not, 'tis probable, entirely laid aſide, till the Emperours themſelves embrac'd the Chriſtian religion. The Chriſtians under almoſt every perſecution were call'd upon *(s)*, to ſwear by *Cæſar*: to ſacrifice, and call him Lord: and their refuſal paſs'd for a certain ſign of diſloyalty, and entail'd upon them all thoſe tortures and miſeries, that bigottry, and madneſs cou'd invent. Some of the Fathers mention the reaſons, why the

(*n*) *Sueton. Claud. cap.* 11.
(*o*) *Tacit. Annal. l.* 1.
(*p*) *Sueton. Calig. cap.* 27.
(*q*) *Ibid. cap.* 24. Vide *Dion. Caſſ. l.* 59.
(*r*) *Dion. Caſſ. l.* 59. *Sueton. Calig. cap.* 55. *Alex. ab Alex. l.* 5. *vol.* 2. *p.* 95.
(*s*) Vide *Polycarp. Mart. Plin. Epiſt. l.* 10. *Epiſt.* 97.

primitive

primitive Chriſtians refus'd to ſwear by the fortune, or *Genius* of *Cæſar*. By fortune they underſtood nothing, but the uncertain viciſſitudes of human affairs: ſo that to ſwear by *Cæſar's Fortune*, was in effect to ſwear by nothing, which muſt be an oath of a vain, trifling, and ſinful nature. They cou'd not ſwear by *Cæſar's Genius*, becauſe, if a *Genius* was any thing in reality, it was an evil ſpirit, or Dæmon; and they were ready to die ten thouſand deaths, rather than give the honour due to Almighty God, to the powers of darkneſs, which they had ſo ſolemnly renounc'd at their Baptiſm (*t*). To ſwear by the Safety of *Cæſar*, *Tertullian* ſpeaks of (*u*), as a juſtifiable practice, amongſt the Chriſtians of his time: but he goes no further, and takes a *Genius*, and a devil to be the ſame thing.

4. They were ſaid to be enemies to *Cæſar*, becauſe they wou'd not ſacrifice (*w*), nor pay any adoration to his Image. The heathens thought they cou'd not do honour enough to *Cæſar*, by ſacrificing for his ſafety; but they grew mad with

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(*t*) *Origen. contra Celſ. l.* 8. *p.* 421. *Tertul. Apol. cap.* 31. *Min. Fel. p.* 283.

(*u*) Sed & juramus, ſicut non per Genios Cæſarum, ita per ſalutem eorum, quæ eſt auguſtior omnibus Geniis. *Ibid.*

(*w*) Deos, inquitis, non colitis, & pro Imperatoribus ſacrificia non impenditis,—— itaq; ſacrilegii, & majeſtatis rei convenimur. *Tertul. Apol. cap.* 10.

loyalty, offer'd up ſacrifices to *Cæſar* himſelf, as God; and treated his ſacred ſtatue, with the ſame ſuperſtitious ceremony, and religious reverence, as they did the ſtatues, of the reſt of their fabulous Deities. The purple robe, the crown and the diadem, univerſal empire, and unlimited power and authority, was not enough for *Cæſar* (*x*): he muſt alſo be worſhipp'd as a God; and the loweſt adoration paid to his ſtatue. *Caligula*, we are told (*y*), gave orders for removing the famous ſtatue of the *Olympian Jupiter*, made by that celebrated artiſt *Phidias*, from Greece to Rome: deſigning to ſtrike off the head, and to have his own ſet on. He was ſaluted by the name of *Jupiter Latialis. The Italian Jupiter.* He had his temple, and his prieſts, and the moſt coſtly ſacrifices were offer'd up, to that abandon'd wretch every day (*z*). Divine honours were alſo paid to the ſtatues of *Nero* (*a*), *Heliogabalus* (*b*), and others (*c*). Nay ſome of the wiſeſt, and beſt of the Roman empe-

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(*x*) *Gregor. Naz. Orat.* 3. *contra Julian. p.* 83.

(*y*) *Sueton. Calig. cap.* 22.

(*z*) *Ibid.* Nec jam procul erat tumulus, in quo Cæſari, Deo noſtro, fiebat quotidianum ſacrum. *Sen. de Tranquillit. Animi, cap.* 14.

(*a*) Medio Tribunal Sedem Curulem, & ſedes effigiem Neronis ſuſtinebat. Ad quam progreſſus Tiridates, cæſis ex more victimis, ſublatum capiti Diadema Imagini ſubjecit. *Tacit. Annal. l.* 15.

(*b*) *Herodian. l.* 5. *cap.* 12. 13.

(*c*) Vide *Dion. Caſſ. l.* 58. *Sueton. Tiber. cap.* 65.

rours,

rours, without any ſcruple admitted of them: as *Trajan*, for inſtance, whoſe vertues have been ſo mightily extoll'd in a fulſom panegyrick (*d*). *Thura adolere, & vinum libare, to burn incenſe, and make a libation of wine* to *Cæſar*'s picture, or ſtatue, was a cuſtom, that probably prevail'd, even as long as the emperours were heathens.

5. The Chriſtians were charg'd with diſloyalty, becauſe they did not keep *Cæſar*'s birth-day (*e*); and other annual feſtivals, that were obſerv'd by the heathens, with great ſolemnity. With what frantick mirth, what irregularity and debauchery, thoſe holy days were celebrated, we learn from *Tertullian*. The houſes were illuminated. The doors dreſs'd up with laurel. The wine ran in the ſtreets. Tables were ſpread in every place; and the whole city look'd like one common Tavern. Luxury, impudence, and lewdneſs was viſible in every quarter. Their mirth degenerated into madneſs, and their feaſting terminated in moſt brutal exceſſes. To get drunk on *Cæſar's* birth-day was meritorious. Sobriety paſs'd for a mark of diſloyalty, and to be loud in their wiſhes for *Cæſar's* health, and proſperity, aton'd for much wicked-

(*d*) Imagini tuæ ——— Thure & Vino ſupplicarent. ———omnes & Imaginem tuam, deorumq; ſimulacra venerati ſunt. *Plin. Trajano. Epiſt.* 97. *l.* 10. Vide *Fragment. Orat. Julian. p.* 537, 539.

(*e*) *Tertul. Apol. cap.* 35.

neſs, and many diſorders. The Chriſtians cou'd not bear a part in thoſe publick rejoycings: ſuch luxury, and licentiouſneſs was no ways ſuitable to their diſcreet, and regular behaviour: nay even the green boughs, and illuminations they cou'd not approve of; becauſe they reſembled the ſtews(*f*): and we find an excommunication, denounc'd by one of the Apoſtolical Canons, againſt thoſe who lighted candles at a heathen feſtival (*g*).

6. The Chriſtians talk'd much of the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of Chriſt; and comforted one another with the hopes and expectations of it: and this created a jealouſie amongſt their enemies, as if they were ſetting up a power, in oppoſition to *Cæſar's* authority. When ye hear us talk of a kingdom, ſays *Juſtin* (*h*), ye raſhly conclude, that we mean a kingdom upon earth: when ye might be convinc'd even to a demonſtration, that we place all our hopes, and all our comforts in the kingdom of Heaven: for when we are examin'd, whether we are Chriſtians, we frankly own that we are; tho' we know that death, is the unavoidable conſequence of ſuch a confeſſion: whereas if it was an earthly kingdom that we aim'd at; we ſhou'd certainly endeavour to preſerve our lives,

(*f*) *Ibid.* Vide *l.* 2. *ad Uxorem. cap.* 6.
(*g*) *Can.* 63.
(*h*) *Apol.* 1.

by

by all poſſible ways, that we might enjoy the protection, the privileges, and advantages of that temporal kingdom. The Jews very early charg'd the Chriſtians with diſaffection to *Cæſar*, becauſe they had another King, the Lord Jeſus.

When *Paul* and *Silas* preach'd to the Jews at *Theſſalonica*, thoſe that believ'd not *drew Jaſon, and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city; crying, theſe that have turn'd the world upſide down, are come hither alſo: whom Jaſon hath receiv'd, and theſe all do contrary to the decrees of Cæſar, ſaying, that there is another King, one Jeſus* (*i*).

7. As the Chriſtians were generally ſuppos'd to be the offspring of the Jews, and ſo nearly related to them, that they were frequently confounded together, and undiſtinguiſh'd: ſo it is not unlikely, that the Jews did, in ſome meaſure at leaſt, occaſion this calumny upon the Chriſtians, being notorious for their diſaffection, and oppoſition to *Cæſar*, and the Roman governours. They were repreſented as a ſeditious, and ſtubborn people, and naturally prone to rebellion (*k*). *Titus*, at the ſiege of Jeruſalem, tells 'em, that ever ſince *Pompey*'s time, they had been making diſturbances,

(*i*) *Acts* 17. 6, 7.

(*k*) Στασιώδεις διαβαλλόμενοι. —— καθηγήσει τὸ ἔθνος τότε δύσχρηστον καὶ δυσπειθὲς φύσει πρὸς τὴν βασιλέως. *Joſeph. de Bello Jud. l.* 2. *cap.* 8.

and waging war with the Romans (*l*). They were perpetually ſtruggling to recover their liberties, and to free themſelves from the ſervitude of the Roman yoke. This they look'd upon as an indiſpenſible duty, and they thought no puniſhment great enough for thoſe, who tamely ſubmitted to the Roman tyranny (*m*). They own'd no ſovereign but God (*n*); and wou'd not ſubmit to any governours, but ſuch as were of their own nation, and ſet over them by the expreſs appointment of Almighty God.

Some of the Jewiſh converts ſeem to have been tainted with theſe notions; and cou'd not forbear expecting a temporal Kingdom of the Meſſiah; and for this reaſon perhaps it has been obſerv'd by *Juſtin* (*o*), that the Gentile converts were better Chriſtians, than thoſe who came from the Jews, and Samaritans: and for the ſame reaſon we find the Apoſtles giving repeated directions to the Jewiſh converts. To be *ſubject to the higher powers. To pay tribute, to whom tribute is due. To ſubmit themſelves to every ordinance of man: whether it be unto the King, or unto governours, that are ſent by him. Not to uſe their liberty for a cloak of maliciouſneſs*, &c (*p*).

(*l*) *Joſeph. de Bello Jud. l. 7. cap.* 34.

(*m*) *Ibid. l.* 2. *cap.* 23. Vide *l.* 2. *c.* 28. *l.* 3. *c.* 25; *l.* 4. *c.* 13. Vide *Deuteron.* 17. 15.

(*n*) Μήτε Ρωμαίοις, μήτ' ἄλλῳ τινὶ δουλεύειν, ἢ Θεῷ. *Ibid. l. ult. cap.* 34.

(*o*) *Apol.* 1.

(*p*) *Rom.* 13. 1, 7. 1 *Pet.* 2. 13, 14, 16.

Having

Having discover'd the foundations of this calumny, it wou'd be needless and impertinent to expose the baseness, and absurdity of it: but it may not be amiss to examine a little further, how the primitive Christians behav'd towards *Cæsar*, and what they said in their own vindication, to obviate the calumny, and to wipe off the imputation of disloyalty: and with a very little inquiry it will soon appear, that they paid *Cæsar* all that respect, that was fit for them to give, and for *Cæsar* to receive; and did every thing that cou'd reasonably be expected by the best of princes, from the best of men.

1. At their daily devotions they never omitted praying for *Cæsar*'s health, and prosperity *(q)*: and they were the more fervent, and importunate in these petitions; because they thought that a great deal depended upon *Cæsar*'s success, and the security of the Roman government. Whilst the Roman empire stood firm, and was in a flourishing condition, all was safe: but the dissolution of that Empire, whenever it shou'd happen, fatally presag'd, as they imagin'd, the coming of Antichrist,

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(q) Precantes sumus semper pro omnibus Imperatoribus, vitam illis prolixam, Imperium securum, domum tutam, exercitus fortes, senatum fidelem, populum probum, orbem quietum, quæcunq; hominis & Cæsaris vota sunt. *Tertul. Apol. cap.* 30. Vide *cap.* 31. *ad Scap. cap.* 2. *Cyprian. ad Demetrian. Arnob. l.* 4. *&c.*

and the diſſolution of the world (*r*). This notion of theirs was deriv'd from a paſſage in St. *Paul*'s ſecond Epiſtle to the Theſſalonians. *c.* 2. *v.* 7, 8. *He who now letteth, will let, untill he be taken out of the way. And then ſhall that wicked one be reveal'd*, &c. Moſt of the Fathers, and antient commentators upon this place (*s*), underſtand by ὁ κατέχων, *he that witholdeth, or letteth*, the Roman ſtate (*t*). Whether they were right, or wrong in the application of this paſſage, is not material at preſent: ſo long as they were of opinion, that the *revelation of the wicked one, the man of ſin*, was retarded by the Roman Empire; they muſt think it to be their duty, as well as their intereſt, to be hearty, and ſincere in their prayers, and their wiſhes for the continuance of that Empire, and the ſucceſs and proſperity of all its governours.

2. They paid tribute to *Cæſar* more punctually, and readily, than any of his heathen ſubjects (*u*): and this they did in conformity to the Example of their great Lord, and maſter, and the directions given by his holy Apoſtles.

(*r*) *Tertul. ad Scap. cap.* 2. *Apol. cap.* 32. *Lactant. l.* 7. *cap.* 25.

(*s*) *Hieron. ad Algaſ. Quæſt.* 11. *Tom.* 4. *p.* 78. *Ambroſ. Chryſoſ. Oecumen. Theophylact. in loc.*

(*t*) *Tertul. de Reſurrectione Carnis. cap.* 24.

(*u*) *Juſtin. Mart. Apol.* 1. *Tatian. Aſſyr. contra Græcos. p.* 143.

3. Many

3. Many of them follow'd *Cæsar* to the Wars, and did eminent services in the field of Battle. There were some amongst them, I confess, that absolutely refus'd to fight under *Cæsar*'s banner: but this proceeded not from any disrespect to his person, or contempt of his authority; but from an opinion, that a military way of life was unlawful, and inconsistent with the duties of a Christian (*w*). Besides let it be observ'd, that this was the opinion but of a few, and not the general sense of the primitive Church. *Tertullian*, who seems not to approve of a Christian's being a soldier, tells the Romans, that their camps, and their castles were fill'd with Christians (*x*). Several of the Martyrs in the first ages of the Church, were soldiers (*y*). There were many Christians that follow'd *M. Antoninus*, in an expedition into *Germany*, who by their prayers obtain'd a signal deliverance, when the whole army was in great distress, and ready to perish for want of water (*z*). The *Thebean* Legion, under the Emperour *Maximian*, consisted of several thousand men, all of them Christians (*a*).

(*w*) *Origen. contra Celf. l.* 8. *p.* 426, 427. *l.* 5. *p.* 253. *Tertul. de Idololat. cap.* 19. *de Corona Mil. cap.* 11. *Lactan. l.* 6. *cap.* 20.

(*x*) *Tertul. Apol. cap.* 37, 42. *de Corona Mil. cap.* 1.

(*y*) Vide *Grot. de jure Belli & Pacis. l.* 1. *cap.* 2.

(*z*) Vide *Epist. M. Aurel. Antonini. apud Justin Mart. Tertul. Apol. cap.* 5. *ad Scap. cap.* 4. *Euseb. Hist Eccles. l.* 5. *cap.* 5.

(*a*) Vide *Grot. de jure Belli & Pacis. l.* 1. *cap.* 4.

4. They

4. They treated the perſon of *Cæſar* with all becoming reverence, and reſpect, and mention'd him with honour. They conſider'd him as one that was ſet over them by Almighty God (*b*), either by way of judgment (*c*), or mercy: either for the orderly, and peaceable government of the world, or for the chaſtiſement of a wicked, and impenitent people. Upon this divine appointment, they founded their Allegiance, and not on the humanity, the juſtice, or clemency of *Cæſar*.

Laſtly, They never reſiſted the higher powers, though they were barbarouſly oppreſs'd, and perſecuted by them; and had frequent opportunities of revenging themſelves upon their enemies. Tho' they labour'd under an infinite variety of ſuch ſhocking cruelties, as can ſcarce be mention'd without horrour; and ſeverely ſmarted under the Tyranny of many a wicked ruler; yet they never made the leaſt oppoſition. Never attempted to depoſe a tyrant, nor ever imbarqu'd in any deſign againſt the life of *Cæſar*. Thoſe renown'd champions for the Chriſtian cauſe, with inimitable patience, and an entire ſubmiſſion, underwent all thoſe oppreſſions, which at other times, have made wiſe men

(*b*) Chriſtianus nullius eſt hoſtis, nedum Imperatoris: quem ſciens a Deo ſuo conſtitui, neceſſe eſt ut & ipſum diligat, & revereatur, & honoret, & ſalvum velit, cum toto Romano Imperio, quouſq; ſæculum ſtabit. *Tertull. ad Scap. cap.* 2.

(*c*) *Tertul. Apol. cap.* 32.

mad,

mad, and have given human nature an aſcendant over the Chriſtian.

There have been ſome, who have attempted to rob the primitive Chriſtians of that honour, and reputation, they had juſtly acquir'd, on this account; by imputing their ſubmiſſion, and nonreſiſtance to human prudence, or policy; to caution, or cowardiſe; to want of numbers, or want of experience in military affairs. But I wou'd fain know, what evidence or authority they have for this. The primitive Chriſtians always declar'd, that they ſubmitted for the Lord's ſake; and becauſe *the powers that be, are ordain'd of God.* To ſay therefore that their obedience was under the regulation of worldly, and prudential motives, is making them guilty of an egregious piece of diſſimulation, before God and man; and charging them with inſincerity, artifice, and diſingenuity: which does not agree with the character of a primitive Chriſtian. Beſides, their enemies, the heathens, who were always very quick-ſighted in diſcovering, and always very ready to expoſe, and publiſh the frailties of a Chriſtian, never imputed their patient ſubmiſſion, under tyrannical oppreſſions, to prudence, and policy, but to obſtinacy, and deſperation, madneſs, or folly. So that this injurious reflection is deſtitute of all manner of evidence, and has not the leaſt foundation.

It is very probable, that the number of Chriſtians under the firſt perſecutions, was not conſide-

rable

rable enough, to engage with the military powers of heathen Rome: but to infer from hence, that their ſubmiſſion proceeded from their want of power, and was under the influence of their fears, is very unfair: ſince the behaviour of the Chriſtians under the laſt perſecutions, when they were vaſtly ſuperior to their enemies, was the very ſame, as it was in the firſt perſecutions, under *Nero*, and *Domitian*. So early as *Trajan*'s reign, when the third perſecution rag'd, we find the Chriſtians repreſented as very numerous by a judicious heathen (*d*). And ſhall we take *Tertullian*'s account of their numbers to be Romantick, and incredible, who wrote his Apology about an hundred years afterwards? He tells the Roman governours, that their cities, and their towns, their forts, and their camps, were fill'd with Chriſtians (*e*): that if they ſhou'd retire out of the provinces of the Roman empire, without ſtriking one blow, they ſhou'd occaſion a general ruin, and deſolation (*f*). Now with what face cou'd *Tertullian* ſay this, if it was falſe; and when it muſt be known to be ſo, by

(*d*) Viſa eſt enim mihi res digna conſultatione, maxime propter periclitantium numerum. Multi enim omnis ætatis, omnis ordinis, utriuſq; ſexus etiam vocantur in periculum, & vocabuntur. Neq; enim Civitates tantum, ſed Vicos etiam atq; agros ſuperſtitionis iſtius contagio pervagata eſt. *Plin. Epiſt.* 97. *l.* 10.

(*e*) *Apol. cap.* 37. Tanta hominum multitudo, pars pene major civitatis cujuſq;. *ad Scap. cap.* 2.

(*f*) *Apol. cap.* 37.

thoſe

thoſe very people to whom he directed his Apology? To ſuppoſe this is to call in queſtion the underſtanding, as well as the veracity, of that great, and learned man (*g*).

After *Tertullian*'s time the Chriſtians ſtill multiply'd apace: and under the tenth perſecution, the imperial armies, and moſt of the principal towns in all the provinces of the Roman empire, were crowded with Chriſtians: and what dutiful ſubmiſſion they paid to cruel, and tyrannical governours, the famous *Thebean* Legion affords us a remarkable, and glorious inſtance. That Legion conſiſted of near ſeven thouſand Chriſtians, who were commanded by *Maximian* to offer up ſacrifices to the heathen Gods: and upon their refuſal, were many of them cruelly ſlain. But not one of thoſe gallant men, made the leaſt reſiſtance, nor ever attempted to obſtruct the execution of *Cæſar*'s commands (*h*). In *Julian*'s army the major part was Chriſtian; but all that Apoſtate cou'd do againſt the Chriſtians, cou'd not make them ſwerve from their Allegiance (*i*).

(*g*) *Tertullian*'s account of the great number of Chriſtians, agrees with what St. *Cyprian* ſays. ——— Nemo noſtrum quando apprehenditur, reluctatur: nec ſe adverſus injuſtam violentiam veſtram, *quamvis nimius & copioſus noſter ſit populus*, ulciſcitur. *ad Demetrian. p.* 192.

(*h*) Vide *Grot. de jure Belli & Pacis. l.* 1. *cap.* 4.

(*i*) Vide *Greg. Naz. Orat.* 1. *contra Julian.*

Admitting

Admitting the Christians were not able to meet *Cæsar*'s victorious Legions in the field: had they no opportunity of gratifying their revenge, in a private way? Cou'd they never take off a tyrant, and an oppressor, by poyson, or a dagger? Were there no divisions in the Roman empire? No competitions for the imperial Diadem? None of the *Cæsars* odious, and unpopular? No malecontents under the worst administration? Yes, a great many: yet those excellent Christians, to their immortal honour, never combin'd with a potent faction; never listed with conspirators, nor had any hand in an assassination.

But further. Why shou'd the Christians be afraid to encounter the Roman armies, if they were once persuaded, that resisting of a lawless tyrant, and a persecutor of the Faith, was a laudable action, and agreeable to the will of the Almighty? Upon this principle, what glorious conquests must they have made, even under an inequality of numbers? What cou'd have stood against men, animated with a truly religious zeal, fearless of dangers, prodigal of life, and ready to meet death in the most frightful, and deformed shapes, with amazing intrepidity? How shou'd they turn themselves back in the day of battle, who were engag'd in the cause of God, and by dying in it, merited a crown of Martyrdom (*k*)?

(*k*) Cui bello non idonei, non prompti fuissemus, etiam impares copiis, qui tam libenter trucidamur? *Tertul. Apol. cap.* 37.

The

The truth of it is: had the primitive Christians thought themselves absolv'd from their Allegiance, and had resisted *Cæsar*, whenever he oppos'd, and persecuted them; they wou'd have acted contrary to the interest of the Christian religion, and effectually hindred its propagation. For, what an outcry wou'd this have rais'd? This wou'd have arm'd all the princes and potentates of the earth against them. The Church cou'd never have got kings to be her nursing Fathers, nor queens her nursing mothers. Christianity cou'd never have got footing, or never made any considerable progress. The new Kingdom of the Son of God might have been crush'd to pieces in its infancy, and all succeeding ages of the world depriv'd of the benefits purchas'd by our holy Redeemer. But to conclude. To say that the primitive Christians submitted to wicked, and tyrannical princes merely out of fear, or upon secular, and prudential views; is a notion false, and absurd, and has been advanc'd by some men, upon no other foundation than this, a desire of making the principles, and the practices of a primitive Christian, Tally with their own.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

The charge of Ignorance and Poverty accounted for.

THere was ſcarce any one Accuſation laid againſt the the primitive Chriſtians, that ſo little affected them as this. They cou'd without much concern, hear themſelves repreſented, as a half-ſtarv'd, and illiterate rabble; as the offscouring of the world, and the dreggs of the people; whilſt they were rich in good works, and wiſe unto Salvation. *Non magna loquimur, ſed vivimus*, was the genuine character of a primitive Chriſtian. To live well, and as became the true Diſciples, and followers of the Lord Jeſus, was the utmoſt of their wiſhes, as well as endeavours. This engroſs'd their time, and their thoughts, and commanded their attention. They were ſo intent upon their duty to their great Creator, and ſo raviſh'd with the expectation of that Glory, which ſhall one day be reveal'd; that they contemn'd all temporal pleaſures, and ſometimes forgot the ordinary conveniencies of life.

Firſt, They were charg'd with the groſſeſt ignorance and ſtupidity, becauſe the infidels ſuppos'd that

that no one cou'd desert their old establish'd superstitions, without first giving up his reason, and disclaiming all manner of pretensions to common understanding. To refuse to worship the pagan deities, and, what was still worse, flatly to deny their existence, betray'd (as they thought) a total absence, and dereliction of all the rational Powers, and had in it an equal mixture of nonsense, and impiety. Their religion was the religion of their Ancestors; and for that reason no consideration cou'd prevail with them to part with it (*a*). It had continued for a great many hundreds of years (*b*). Had been embrac'd by an infinite number of People, and by many that had been renown'd for learning, and probity. On the other hand, the Christians were look'd upon as a novel sect, that sprung up but yesterday (*c*), and was *every where spoken against* (*d*): and whoever cou'd

(*a*) Non me ex ea opinione, quam a majoribus accepi de cultu Deorum immortalium, ullius unquam Oratio, aut docti, aut indocti, movebit. *Cotta apud Tull. de Nat. Deor. l. 3.*

(*b*) Hæ sunt religiones, quas sibi a majoribus suis traditas, pertinacissime tueri, ac defendere perseverant: nec considerant quales sint, sed ex hoc probatas, atq; veras esse confidunt, quod eas veteres tradiderunt: tantaq; est authoritas vetustatis, ut inquirere in eam, scelus esse ducatur: itaq; creditur ei passim, tanquam cognitæ veritati. *Lactan. l. 2. cap. 6.*

(*c*) Sed novellum nomen est nostrum, & ante dies paucos religio est nata, quam sequimur. *Arnob. adv. Gentes. l. 2 p. 92.* Vide *p. 94. Theoph. ad Autol. l. 3.*

(*d*) *Acts* 28. 22.

prefer these modern opinions, to those old, and venerable pagan rites, and ceremonies, was thought to be seiz'd with a desperate phrenzy, or at least, to have had an uncommon weakness, and defect in his understanding.

Secondly. They were tax'd with ignorance, because there were somethings in the Christian religion (as the heathens impiously, and falsly suggested) that were calculated only for idiots, and fools; and which no one cou'd give his assent to, without proclaiming his own ignorance, and stupidity. How were the poor Christians ridicul'd, and charg'd with a senseless credulity, for asserting the resurrection of the body? The heathens foolishly attempted to baffle their hopes, and expectations of it, by burning the bodies of the Martyrs, and casting their ashes upon the Waters (*e*). When the Athenians heard St. *Paul* speak of the resurrection of the dead, *some mocked* (*f*). *Lucian* with a prophane sneer, derides the Christians, for expecting a resurrection to eternal life (*g*): and *Pliny* the elder declares it to be an impossibility, even with God himself, to call the dead to life again (*h*).

(*e*) *Euseb. Eccles. Hist. l.* 5. *cap.* 1. *Ammian. Marcellin. l.* 22. *cap.* 11.

(*f*) *Acts* 17. 32.

(*g*) Πεπείκασι γὰρ αὐτὺς οἱ κακοδαίμονες, τὸ μὲν ὅλον ἀθάνατοι ἔσεσθαι, καὶ βιώσεσθαι τὸν ἅπαντα χρόνον. *De Morte Peregrini.*

(*h*) *Nat. Hist. l.* 2. *cap.* 7.

2. To

2. To believe in, and to worſhip a crucified *Jeſus*, to a blind and bigotted heathen gave great offence; and was ſuppos'd to be the effect of a moſt barbarous ignorance. Had our bleſſed Lord appear'd in dazling Pomp, and ſplendour, deck'd with all the ornaments of majeſty, and power: had he beat down all oppoſition, and triumph'd over all his enemies, they then perhaps might have paid him homage, and adoration: but they conceiv'd a ſtrange prejudice againſt the bleſſed Jeſus, when they ſaw him a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief: and at laſt ſuffering death upon the Croſs. A death moſt cruel and ignominious, and inflicted only upon ſlaves, and the moſt capital offenders (*i*). This was one of the greateſt difficulties the Apoſtles had to encounter. To preach Chriſt crucify'd, was to the Jews a ſtumbling block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs (*k*). To give divine honours to a crucify'd man, merited the title of madneſs (*l*), in the opinion of the heathens. This *Celſus* calls (*m*) a baſe, and a wicked thing: and *Lucian* ridicules the Chriſtians,

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(*i*) Piratas, a quibus captus eſt, quum in deditionem redegiſſet, quoniam ſuffixurum ſe cruci ante juraverat, jugulari prius juſſit, deinde ſuffigi. *Sueton. de Jul. Cæſar. cap.* 74.

(*k*) 1 *Corinth.* 1. 23.

(*l*) *Juſtin Mart. Apol.* 1. Vide *Lactan. l.* 4. *c.* 16.

(*m*) *Origen. contra Celſ. l.* 7. *p.* 340.

for worshipping a man that was crucify'd in *Palestine* (*n*).

3. Many of the heathens, and particularly the *Stoicks*, and *Epicureans*, absolutely deny'd a Providence, and maintain'd that the Gods had little or no concern for human affairs (*o*). They fancy'd that all the good, and the evil things of life, were distributed by blind chance, since they observ'd wickedness sometimes triumphant, thriving in reputation, and power: and vertue, and innocence frequently attended with infamy, poverty, and misery. Since a *Phalaris*, or a *Dionysius* had a Kingdom, and *Socrates*, one of the best of Men, a cup of poyson (*p*). They thought the Christians, a silly set of People, for imagining, that all the creatures in the world were under the immediate care, and direction of an allwise, and mercyful Creator. And when they saw the poor Christians pinch'd with hardships and miseries, with an impious, and insulting air, they cry'd out, *where is now their God?*

4. Again. Their patience, and courage under persecutions, and afflictions, was imputed to weakness, and folly. How silly, and ridiculous

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(*n*) Τὸν μέγαν γὲν ἐκεῖνον ἔπι σίβεσιν ἄνθρωπον, τὸν ἐν τῇ παλαισίνῃ ἀνασκολοπισθέν]α.——Τὸν ὃ ἀνεσκολοπισμένον ἐκεῖνον σοφισὴ αὐτῆ πεπεικωῶσι. *de Mort. Peregrini.*

(*o*) *Theoph. ad Autolic. l.* 2. *vid. Tull. de nat. Deor. l.* 3. *&c.*

(*p*) *Min. Fel. p.* 41.

were

were the Christians thought to be, when they suffer'd torments and death, and at the same time had it in their own power to escape with impunity, and to live at ease and in plenty (*q*)? What harm is there said the heathens in sacrificing to the Gods, in calling *Cæsar* Lord, and swearing by his *Genius* (*r*)? and yet those silly and deluded wretches the Christians, absolutely refus'd to pay divine honours to *Cæsar*, or any of the pagan deities: tho' they were sensible, the loss of life, and fortunes, was the unavoidable consequence of their noncompliance. What an egregious instance of folly was it reckon'd in the Christians, to despise present torments, and yet to be afraid of those that are future, and uncertain (*s*)? To undervalue, and part with a present Good, in hopes of a future recompence. How were they laugh'd at, for despising of riches, whilst they were oppress'd with a miserable poverty? For slighting of temporal honours, and preferments, even when they were half naked, and starving (*t*): and for forgiving of their enemies, when they had it in their power to do themselves justice, and to make re-

(*q*) Et si hominibus videtur ineptum, ac stultum, torqueri, & mori velle, cum libere liceat abire sine noxa: ——*Lactant. Epit. cap.* 1.

(*r*) *Polycarp. Mart. cap.* 8.

(*s*) Proh mira stultitia, & incredibilis audacia! Spernunt tormenta præsentia, dum incerta metuunt & futura: & dum mori post mortem timent, interim mori non timent. *Min. Fel. p.* 79.

(*t*) *Ibid.*

prizals? This was such a behaviour, as discover'd, according to the Language of the heathens, a downright phrenzy, or at least an unaccountable ignorance, and stupidity (*u*).

Thirdly. A misrepresentation of some passages in the holy Scriptures, made by the heathens with a base, and malicious design, help'd forward the charge of ignorance. *Ye see your calling, brethren,* says St. Paul (*w*), *how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise: and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things that are mighty: and base things of the world, and things which are despis'd, hath God chosen.* And again in the same chapter. *Christ sent me —— to preach the Gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ shou'd be made of none effect. —— For it is written I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,* &c. Upon these passages, *Celsus* grounds a severe, and most spiteful calumny; which is confuted at large by *Origen* (*x*). Because the Apostle says, *not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty were called:*

(*u*) Cum enim cœperit Deo quisquam vivere, mundum contemnere, injurias suas nolle ulcisci, nolle hic divitias, non hic quærere felicitatem terrenam, contemnere omnia, Dominum solum cogitare, viam Christi non deserere, non solum a paganis dicitur insanus: sed —— *Augustin. in Psalm.* 48. *Concio.* 2.

(*w*) 1 *Corinth.* 1. 26.

(*x*) *Contra Celsi. l.* 3. *p.* 140.

but

but God chose the weak things of the World, &c. *Celsus* draws this base conclusion, that all the Christians were profoundly ignorant, and illiterate; men of low fortunes and mean parentage. Nay his malice carries him a strain further; and he tells us (*y*), that the preachers of the Gospel gave it in charge, that no one should be admitted as a convert to Christianity that was *learned, or wise, or prudent; for these things amongst the Christians are reputed Evils. But whoever is unlearned, or foolish, or imprudent, may boldly come, and be admitted.*

A little further *Celsus* gives us another specimen of his virulent malice, and ignorance. It is said of our Saviour (*z*), that he convers'd with Publicans and Sinners; and declar'd, that *he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* Upon this *Celsus* confidently asserts, that none were call'd to be Christians, but men of an infamous character, and flagitious behaviour. Such as were guilty of theft, sacrilege, and other capital, and enormous offences (*a*). These reflections are the more base, and villainous, as they must be contrary to his knowledge, and the convictions of his own mind. He cou'd not be ignorant, that the generality of the primitive Christians, were

(*y*) *Origen. contra Celf. l.* 3. *p.* 137.
(*z*) *Mat.* 9. 10.
(*a*) *Origen. contra Celf. l.* 3. *p.* 147. *vid. l.* 1. *p.* 49. *Barnab. Epist. cap.* 5.

men of excellent morals, and the ſtricteſt vertues: and that ſeveral of them were as eminent for their knowledge, as they were for their piety.

Fourthly. They were ſaid to be ignorant, becauſe they were unacquainted with thoſe politer parts of human literature, that were then in faſhionable repute. The heathens were ſtrangely elated with an imaginary conceit of their own wiſdom, and entertain'd with contempt the moſt important truths, when deliver'd with plainneſs, and an artleſs ſimplicity. To be able to ſpeak, or write with propriety, and method; or to reaſon with judgment, and perſpicuity, was not ſufficient, to ſcreen a man from the character of a rude, and illiterate barbarian: unleſs there was alſo a purity, and Elegancy of ſtyle; artful, and elaborate periods; and a tolerable acquaintance with the various maxims, and rules, laid down by the Philoſophers. Hence *Amelius* the Philoſopher calls St. *John* the Evangeliſt *barbarian* (*b*). and the ſame title is given to all Chriſtians in general by *Porphyry*, and others (*c*).

(*b*) *Euſeb. præpar. l.* 11. *cap.* 19. vide *Cyrill. contra Julian. l.* 8.

(*c*) Ορθῶς ——— περὶ τὸ βάρβαρον ἐξώκειλε πλῆμμα. *Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccleſ. l.* 6. *cap.* 19. vide *Tatian. Orat. ad Græc. Juſtin. Apol. Iſidor. Pelus. l.* 4. *Epiſt.* 27. 28. *Theodoret. ad Græc. Serm.* 5. *Lucian. de mort. Pereg.*

Beauty

Beauty and ſublimity of language wonderfully captivated the heathens, and gave a ſecret biaſs to their underſtandings. Without thoſe embelliſhments, the beſt and moſt judicious pieces were thrown aſide with ſcorn; and with thoſe, the weakeſt performances were read with pleaſure. I have very often thought, that if ſome of thoſe authors that are ſaid to be matchleſs, and inimitable, were ſtripp'd of the ornaments of language, and their thoughts cloath'd in a common, and ordinary dreſs, they wou'd make a mean, and contemptible figure. Had the Roman Empire continued much longer in a flouriſhing condition, and due encouragement been given to men of fine parts, and Genius, the age of *Auguſtus* wou'd never have been the ſtandard, for polite learning, and language; and ſome of thoſe celebrated pieces wou'd long ſince have been laid aſide, whoſe authors have vainly promis'd themſelves an immortality. For, every living language is conſtantly liable to changes, and alterations; words grow obſolete, and then unintelligible: are firſt old faſhion'd, and then are laid aſide. And wherever care is taken to refine and beautifie a language, the writings, as well as the language, of every ſucceeding age, will be preferr'd to the former. 'Tis with learning and language, as it is with our cloaths: the preſent mode is commonly the beſt approv'd of: and however we may value our ſelves upon our preſent refinements, elegancy and

and exactneſs, poſterity will treat us with the ſame diſregard and contempt, as we beſtow upon thoſe, who liv'd an age or two ago. So that all that an author can hope for, who writes in a language, that continues a long time after to be a living one, is (as Mr. *Pope* ſomewhere obſerves) to be read in one country, and to be thrown aſide at the end of one age.

The reaſons why the Goſpel was not at firſt preach'd with *excellency of ſpeech, nor with enticing words of man's wiſdom*, are very obvious. *Firſt*, There was no occaſion to make uſe of ſuch a method, nor wou'd it have been of any real advantage to the Chriſtian cauſe. For, elegant and rhetorical expreſſions, however they may tickle and pleaſe the ſenſes, never reach the heart, nor make any deep, and laſting impreſſions. The world was converted by miracles, that carried an irreſiſtible force, and conviction along with them. By the innocence, and holyneſs of thoſe, that preached the Goſpel. By their patience, and magnanimity under all their ſufferings: and by the incomparable excellency of the precepts they deliver'd: which were admirably calculated, for the peace, and happineſs of the world, and had a natural tendency to make men wiſer, and better, happy here, and happy for ever. Without the aſſiſtance of heathen learning, the knowledge of the bleſſed Jeſus was ſoon propagated in all parts. *His ſound went out unto the ends of the world, and his dominion*

reach'd

reach'd from one ſea to the other. *Secondly*, The Goſpel was not preach'd with worldly wiſdom, becauſe, if this method had been purſu'd, it wou'd have produc'd infinite miſchief, and rendred *the Croſs of Chriſt of none effect.* More perhaps of the learned Gentiles wou'd have come over to Chriſtianity: but then that worldly wiſdom wou'd have been more attended to, than the word of God. The truth of God wou'd have been blended, and adulterated with learned ſpeculations, and philoſophical ſubtleties. *My ſpeech and my preaching*, ſays St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* 2. 4. *was not with enticing words of mans wiſdom, but in demonſtration of the ſpirit, and of power: that your faith ſhou'd not ſtand in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God.*

Fifthly. The Chriſtians were ſaid to be unlearned, and conſequently ignorant, becauſe ſeveral of them abſolutely refus'd to read the writings of the heathens. We learn from *Clement* of *Alexandria*, that there were ſome Chriſtians who condemned the reading of any prophane author, as a fruitleſs, and impertinent labour, and miſpending of time. And that there were others, who look'd upon philoſophy, as a dangerous, and deſtructive thing (*d*): that had for its author, and inventer the devil, and his Apoſtate Angels (*e*). *Clement*,

(*d*) *Strom.* 1. *c.* 1. *p.* 326.

(*e*) *Strom. l.* 1. *c.* 17. *Tertul. de cultu fœm. l.* 1. *c.* 2. *Herm. irrit. Philos.*

as

as he was master of a vast compass of gentile literature, and was learned in all the wisdom of the Greeks; thought himself oblig'd in his own vindication, to expose and confute this silly, and extravagant opinion: which he has effectually done, in his first book of his *Stromata*. *Origen*, we find, was censur'd by some weak and injudicious Christians, for his studying the sciences: but he shews (*f*), that they are not only innocent, but useful: and he justifies his own conduct in this particular, by the example of the famous *Pantænus*, and of *Heraclas*; who had such a value for the Græcian philosophy, that tho' he was a Presbyter of the Church at *Alexandria*, he wore the habit of a Philosopher (*g*).

The pretended Apostolical Constitutions prohibit the reading of all heathen books (*h*); which affords us (as I have shew'd (*i*) on another occasion) a most excellent argument, to prove them spurious. For, this Apostolical Decree is never once mention'd, by those who contended either for, or against the lawfulness of reading prophane authors; and besides 'tis a contradiction to the practice of St. *Paul*, who had read several of the heathen Po-

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(*f*) *Philocal. c.* 13.
(*g*) *Origen. Epist. apud Euseb. Eccles. Hist. l.* 6. *c.* 19.
(*h*) Τῶν ἐθνικῶν βιβλίων πάντων ἀπέχου. *l.* 1. *c.* 6.
(*i*) Discourse of the pretended Apostolical Constitutions. *chap.* 10.

ets (*k*). There is a canon in *Gratian*'s collection (*l*), which is of the same nature, and of the same authority, with this Apostolical Constitution.

In *Julian*'s reign, and a considerable time before, the Christians had conquer'd their scruples, about the lawfulness of reading heathen authors. They were then become great proficients in all the polite, as well as more useful parts of heathen literature. They were a match for the pagans, even at their own weapons: which gave *Julian* some jealousy and uneasiness, and put him upon the publication of an Edict; by which he forbad the Christians to be instructed, in the learning of the Greeks (*m*).

But tho' the weakness or indiscretion of a few Christians, who condemn'd all heathen learning, might in some measure justify, and support the charge of ignorance, and want of learning; yet the Church of Christ, in all the ages of it, has produc'd many eminent and learned worthies. Whoever will be at the pains of perusing *Photius*'s *Bibliotheca*, *Jerom*'s *Catalogue of Ecclesiastical Writers*, and *Eusebius*'s *History*, will soon perceive,

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(*k*) *Act.* 17. 28. 1 *Cor.* 15. 33. *Tit.* 1. 12. vide *Socrat. Hist. Eccles. l.* 3. *c.* 16.

(*l*) *Episcopus Gentilium libros non legat. dist.* 37.

(*m*) Inter quæ erat illud inclemens, quod docere vetuit magistros Rhetoricos & Grammaticos, Christianos. *Amm. Marcellin. l.* 25. *p.* 427. Vide *Socrat. Hist. Eccles. l.* 3. *cap.* 12. 16.

how

how little reaſon *Celſus*, *Porphyry*, and *Julian* had, to repreſent the whole body of Chriſtians, as a pack of rude, unciviliz'd, and illiterate Barbarians (*n*). Many of the Græcian Philoſophers came over to Chriſtianity; and liv'd, and died glorious defenders of the faith. Of this ſort was *Ariſtides*, *Juſtin*, *Theophilus*, *Athenagoras*, *Hermias*, *Pantænus*; beſides a great many more in the ſecond Century, whoſe names, as well as writings are loſt, and forgotten (*o*). There were many other learned Chriſtians in the ſame century, and the beginning of the third: as *Agrippa Caſtor*, *Melito*, *Apollinaris*, *Dionyſius* of *Corinth*, *Pinytus*, *Miltiades*, *Clement* of *Alexandria*, *Tertullian*, *Minucius Felix*, *Africanus*, *Origen*, *Heraclas*, &c. The third and fourth centuries were bleſs'd with an infinite number of great men, who were ſtrenuous advocates for the Chriſtian cauſe, and eternally ſilenc'd the cavils of its enemies: and if there are ſome things to be

(*n*) Diſcant ergo Celſus, Porphyrius, Julianus, rabidi adverſus Chriſtum canes, diſcant eorum ſectatores, qui putant Eccleſiam, nullos Philoſophos & Eloquentes, nullos habuiſſe Doctores, quanti & quales viri eam fundaverint, extruxerint, & ornaverint; & deſinant fidem noſtram, ruſticæ tantum ſimplicitatis arguere, ſuamque potius imperitiam agnoſcant. *Epiſt. Hieron. Dextro.*

(*o*) Nonne vel hæc ſaltem fidem vobis faciunt argumenta credendi, quod ——— tam magnis ingeniis præditi Oratores, Grammatici, Rhetores, conſulti juris ac medici, Philoſophiæ etiam ſecreta rimantes, Magiſteria hæc expetunt, ſpretis quibus paulo ante fidebant? *Arnob. adv. Gentes. l.* 2. *p.* 44.

met

met with in the writings of the primitive Christians, that we cannot relish or approve of; it ought to be consider'd, that learning, like all other things, has its fashions; and that every age and country has its peculiar ways of writing, and managing of an argument. Many things that displease now, were much admir'd fifteen, or sixteen hundred years ago; and what is now highly applauded, may be condemn'd by succeeding generations.

There were many learned men, both among the Jews and heathens, that entertain'd a secret value, and esteem for the Christian religion; but wou'd not openly declare in its favour; being under the influence of some carnal considerations. It was reported of *Philo*, the learned Alexandrian Jew, that he was once a Christian (*p*): and we are told by *Eusebius*, and *Jerom* (*q*), that he convers'd familiarly with St. *Peter* at Rome. Yet he does not once mention the Christians, by any name whatsoever (*r*). Had he made an honourable mention of them, he must have drawn the malice of his brethren upon himself, and injur'd both his interest, and his reputation: and he cou'd not per-

(*p*) *Phot. Biblioth. cod.* 105.

(*q*) *Hist. Eccles. l.* 2. *c.* 17. *Catal. Script. Eccles c* 11.

(*r*) The *Therapeutæ*, of whom *Philo* gives a very great character, were certainly no Christians, as has been substantially prov'd, by many learned men.

haps

haps fall in with the popular clamour, and publickly expose the Christian name, without offering violence to the truth, and contradicting his own sentiments: so that his silence in this case, seems to be an approbation of that, which he had not the courage openly to commend.

The same thing may be said of *Josephus*, another learned Jew; who never throws the least reflection upon the Christians; tho' if he had done it, he wou'd thereby have oblig'd his brethren the Jews, as well as the Roman Emperours, that he courted with too servile condescensions. There is a famous passage in his history, relating to our blessed Saviour (*s*); but it is of a controverted authority; and indeed as it stands in the present copies of *Josephus*, carries visible marks of corruption, and interpolation. He mentions James (*t*) the brother Ἰησοῦ τοῦ λεγομένου Χριστοῦ, *of Jesus that was call'd Christ:* and tells us (as he is cited by *Origen* (*u*), *Eusebius*, *Jerom*, and some others) that *James* was thrown from off the top of the temple, and kill'd by the Jews, because he maintain'd, that Jesus was the son of God. And notwithstanding this, he gives him a very high character, and adds, that those dreadful calamities that afterwards befell Jerusa-

(*s*) *Antiq. l.* 18. *cap.* 4.
(*t*) *Antiq. l* 20. *cap.* 8.
(*u*) *Contra Celf. l.* 1. *p.* 35. *l.* 2. *p.* 69. *In Matt.* 13. *Euseb. H. E. l.* 2. *cap.* 23. *Hieron. Catal. cap.* 2. 13.

lem,

lem, were generally look'd upon as a divine judgment upon the Jews, for their killing that righteous and holy man, *James*, ſirnam'd the Juſt.

It has been long ago obſerv'd of *Seneca*, the Philoſopher, that in a book which is now loſt (*w*), he ſmartly ridicul'd both the Religion of the Jews, and the pagan ſuperſtitions, and idolatry: but ſaid not one word, either good or bad, of the Chriſtians: being unwilling to cenſure them, and afraid to commend them (*x*). Whether this Philoſopher held a correſpondence with St. *Paul*, is uncertain at leaſt, if not improbable. Thoſe eight Epiſtles of *Seneca* to St. *Paul*, and thoſe ſix from *Paul* to *Seneca* (*y*), being indiſputably ſpurious. However they are of a very old date; and thus much may be collected from them, that the forger of them proceeded upon a common and current report, that *Seneca* had a favourable opinion of the Chriſtians. 'Tis certain *Seneca* was at Rome, when that monſter *Nero* butcher'd the poor Chriſtians, in that horrid manner, deſcrib'd by *Tacitus* (*z*):

(*w*) *Contra Superſtitiones apud Auguſtin. de Civit. Dei. l. 6. cap.* 10, 11.

(*x*) Chriſtianos tamen, jam tunc Judæis inimiciſſimos, in neutram partem commemorare auſus eſt; ne vel laudaret, contra ſuæ patriæ veterem conſuetudinem, vel reprehenderet, contra propriam forſitan voluntatem. *Ibid.*

(*y*) *Edit. Pariſ.* 1515. *Cum Pauli Epiſt. & Ob ſervat. Fabri Stap.*

(*z*) *L.* 15. *Annal. p.* 279.

and if we may believe the conjecture of a learned man (*a*), he was so much offended at those unparallell'd cruelties, that he ask'd leave of the Emperour to retire into the country: and when this favour was refus'd him, he shut himself up in his own house, under the pretence of an indisposition (*b*).

It is the opinion of *Theodoret* (*c*), that *Plutarch*, who frequently speaks in the language of a Christian, had read the Apostolical writings: and yet he never mentions the Christians, tho' he had many times a handle given him for doing it, and his subject naturally lead him that way. He died at an advanc'd age, about the end of *Trajan*'s reign, when the Christians, by *Pliny*'s confession, were grown very numerous: so that his silence cannot possibly be attributed to his ignorance of, or unacquaintance with the Christian sect; but rather to the reason mention'd by St. *Austin*, concerning *Seneca*.

The first century produc'd several more great men, who never reproach'd the Christians, but cou'd not forbear giving a fling at the Jews, whenever they came in their way (*d*). Nay, what is

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(*a*) *Lud. vives. Comment. in cap.* 11. *Augustin. de Civitat. Dei. l.* 6.

(*b*) Vide *Tacit. Annal. l.* 15. *p.* 280.

(*c*) *Serm.* 2. *de Princip.*

(*d*) Vide *Quintilian. Inst. Orator. l.* 3. *cap.* 9. *Plin. Nat. Hist. l.* 13. *cap.* 14.

highly

highly remarkable, there is not one of the wits, or satyrists of that age, that lampoons the Christians. Neither *Petronius*, nor *Persius*, neither *Juvenal*, nor *Martial*, to say nothing of *Lucan*, or *Silius Italicus*. It is agreed by some of the best commentators upon *Juvenal*, that in one place he alludes to *Nero*'s cruelty upon the Christians (*e*): and why did he not take that opportunity of abusing them? He liv'd, as 'tis said, to the age of fourscore years, till the beginning of *Adrian*'s reign; and consequently had seen three persecutions of the Christians. He lash'd with the keenest satyr, the vices and follies, the superstitions, luxury, and lewdness of his own times; but has not one reflection upon that *Atheistical sect of Christians*: that cursed, and *destructive Superstition*, that prevail'd then at *Rome* (*f*): not so much as one single line, that is applicable to the Christians (*g*). What imaginable reason can be assign'd for it, but this, he cou'd find nothing blameable in the con-

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(*e*) Pone Tigillinum: Tæda lucebis in illa,
Qua stantes ardent, qui fixo gutture fumant. *Sat.* 1.

(*f*) Repressaq; in præsens exitiabilis superstitio rursus erumpebat, non modo per Judæam originem ejus mali, sed per urbem etiam. *Tacit. Annal. l.* 15.

(*g*) Some have imagin'd, that *Juvenal* describes the poverty of the Christians, under the name of Jews, in these lines:

Nunc sacri fontis nemus & Delubra locantur
Judæis: quorum Cophinus, fænumq; supellex. *Sat.* 3.

But whoever compares these, with *Verse* 543. *Sat.* 6. must allow this to be a mistake.

duct of a Christian? This conjecture will appear more probable by observing, *First*, that *Juvenal* was a man of vertue and morality, and stood clear of those vices he ridicul'd: and *Secondly*, that he treated the heathen Gods with but little respect, and like a man, who look'd upon them as fictitious Deities (*h*).

St. *Austin* tells us (*i*) of one *Victorinus* in the fourth century, a man eminently learned and eloquent, who refused for a long time to make a publick profession of Christianity, for fear of disobliging his heathen friends. There were doubtless, a great many more under the same circumstances: who were secretly convinc'd of the truth, and excellency of the Christian religion; but disguis'd their sentiments, being under the influence of some worldly motives, and views. By an open declaration in favour of the Christians, they were apprehensive of incurring the displeasure of those, that they had reason, either to love, or to fear. They were afraid of exposing themselves to difficulties, and dangers: of risquing their ease, and security, and hazarding of life, or fortune, or both. But the danger of sacrificing a reputation for learning, and worldly wisdom, was one of the strongest prejudices against a publick profession of

(*h*) *Sat. 6. vers. 60. Sat. 13. a vers. 40. ad vers. 53.*
(*i*) *Confess. l. 8. cap. 2.*

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the Christian faith. For a learned Philosopher to go over to the Christians, was openly proclaiming his former ignorance and error, which but few were very willing to own. 'Twas bartering of fame, for ignominy: and exchanging of wealth, and honour, for poverty, and contempt.

There were others, that for some time made an open profession of the Christian faith; but when they saw a storm arising, they took shelter among the infidels, and deserted the society of Christians. *Porphyry*, the most learned, and shrewdest adversary, the Christians ever had, we are told, embrac'd the Christian religion (*k*): being probably instructed in it by *Origen*, with whom he was acquainted in his youth (*l*): but being beaten by some Christians at *Cæsarea* in *Palæstine*, he resented this ill usage so much, that he not only went off from the Christians, but set himself to write against them, with all imaginable spite and virulence (*m*). There were probably other reasons, that forwarded this Apostasy: perhaps his covetous, or ambitious views were baulk'd; or he found his reputation in danger of being eclips'd, by herding with *illiterate barbarians*. In a word,

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(*k*) *Euseb. apud Socrat. Hist. Eccl. l.* 3. *cap.* 23. *Augustin. de Civit. Dei, l.* 10. *cap.* 28. *Niceph. l.* 10. *c.* 36. Vide *Luc. Holsten. de vita Porph. c.* 5.

(*l*) *Euseb. l.* 6. *cap.* 19. *Vincent. Lirinens. cap.* 23.

(*m*) *Socrat. Hist. Eccles. l.* 3. *cap.* 23.

ſo great, and ſo general were the corruptions in the heathen world; ſo ſtrong were thoſe prejudices, that lay againſt Chriſtianity; ſo powerfully did both intereſt, and reputation plead, in behalf of gentile idolatry and ſuperſtition, that it muſt be a moſt wonderful thing (and what nothing cou'd poſſibly have effected, but that Being, with whom nothing is impoſſible) that ſo many Philoſophers, and ſo many learned men, ſhou'd renounce not only their inveterate errors, but alſo their temporal happineſs, and eaſe, and believe in a crucify'd Jeſus. But Great is truth, and will prevail! and eſpecially when it is aſſiſted by Heaven, and ſupported by the arm of Almighty God.

I now proceed to the ſecond branch of the article, which charges the Chriſtians with poverty, with lowneſs of circumſtances, and baſeneſs of extraction. It muſt be own'd that moſt of the firſt converts to Chriſtianity, were of the lower part of mankind: and that ſtill generally ſpeaking, 'tis ſuch as thoſe who now pay the greateſt regard to the duties of religion. By far the greater part of that ſmall ſtock of vertue and goodneſs, that is to be met with in the world, is found amongſt men, that are ſituated in an inferiour rank. They were men of a mean and ſervile condition, that came to the wedding ſupper, and as ſuch as thoſe were the firſt, ſo 'tis probable, they'll be the laſt Chriſtians in the world. Thoſe that are plac'd in a ſuperiour and more honourable claſs, have general-

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ly ſpeaking, nothing ſo little at heart as their duty to their Creator: and leave the drudgery of religion to men of narrow fortunes, of grief, and miſery. It frequently happens, that the higher a man is plac'd in the world, the greater in proportion is his neglect of his duty: the more ſcandalous his contempt of religion, and the more egregious his impieties.

The reaſons why the firſt converts were men of a middle, or inferiour ſtation, were as follows. Some of thoſe reaſons are mention'd in the Parable, *Luke* 14. 16. and particularly theſe two, worldly advantages, and worldly pleaſures: intimated by buying a piece of ground, and marrying a wife. One condition of admittance into the kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt, was renouncing all temporal profits and pleaſures, when they ſtood in competition with their duty. Whoever *hates not*, ſays our Lord, *father and mother, and life it ſelf for my ſake, he cannot be my Diſciple.* Now ſince ſelf-denyal is enjoyn'd every diſciple of the Lord Jeſus, 'tis plain that thoſe who enjoy'd the leaſt of the good things of life, wou'd be the moſt ready to embrace the Chriſtian religion: and thoſe wou'd naturally have the greateſt averſion and diſlike to it, who were in poſſeſſion of the largeſt fortunes. Agreeably to this, we may obſerve that the young man in the Goſpel, who had kept the commandments; and on all other accounts ſeem'd qualify'd for a diſciple of the Lord Jeſus, when our Saviour bad him *ſell*

what he had, and give to the poor, went away ſorrowful, for he had great poſſeſſions. The duties enjoyn'd a Chriſtian, will ſeem more or leſs difficult, according to a man's circumſtances. Self-denyal will be no hardſhip to him, that is accuſtom'd to want, and poverty: nor will mortification be a difficult task to one, that has been a long time acquainted with miſery. But for a man to renounce all temporal advantages, when he has got a very great ſhare in them: and to retire from the world, when he might live happily in it, is what human nature will not ſo readily comply with: and this I take to be one principal reaſon, why the firſt that came over to Chriſtianity, were generally ſpeaking, the inferior part of mankind.

2. But we may be able to account for it another way, why men of a proſperous condition, and of plentiful fortunes, ſhou'd not ſo readily embrace the Chriſtian religion; nor when they have embrac'd it, ſo ſtrictly obſerve the duties it enjoyns. Thoſe earthly treaſures too often have the ſupreme command of our affections, and engroſs our time, and our thoughts. They give a fatal interruption to our duty, and divert us from the care of the one thing needful. Do not we ſee now a-days, many a one poſſeſs'd with the devil of avarice, whoſe deſires increaſe with their poſſeſſions; who have not the leaſt regard for any thing, but what promotes their gain, and advanceth their intereſt? Like *Judas*, they'll betray even their

their Saviour for money; and for temporal enjoyments which are but for a moment, they'll pawn an inheritance eternal in the heavens. An immoderate care and regard for the good things of this life, is inconsistent with a true sense of our duty, or at least, with a strict and religious observation of it: 'tis therefore no wonder, the poor, the halt, and the blind, that is men of an inferiour station, came to the wedding supper, when the rich and the mighty rejected the invitation, and alledg'd by way of excuse, that they had *bought a piece of ground, or five yoke of oxen, and must needs go and see them.*

3. The lower part of mankind were the first converts to Christianity, because they were exercis'd with more afflictions, and were strangers to delicacies and pleasures, which are scarcely to be reconcil'd with the duties of Christianity; have a fatal tendency to debauch men both in principle and practice, and to alienate their affections towards God, and their duty. Worldly pleasures when they insinuate themselves into our good graces, entirely take us off from our duty; or at least, those parts of it, which are contrary to those pleasing allurements, and gratifications of sense. The strictest virtue, and the greatest prosperity, seldom, or never meet together. He that abounds in plenty and pleasures, and meets with all the satisfaction this world can afford him, very often forgets to make those returns of gratitude, and obedience,

obedience, that are due to his infinitely kind benefactor. What occasion has he to mind the duties of religion, when he's happy without it? Let miserable creatures petition heaven for relief, and take care to observe the laws of their Creator. He's in possession of all that his heart can desire; and thinks all acts of religion impertinent, and superfluous, under a state of ease, of happiness, and pleasure. Some of the Precepts of Christianity are quite opposite, to that licentiousness and ease, that he indulgeth himself in, and therefore the thoughts of them are rejected, for fear they shou'd damp his pleasures, and spoil the relish of his temporal enjoyments. But men of an inferior class, are generally more sensible of the wants, and calamities that attend human nature. This brings them to sober reflections. This makes them examine into the source of their miseries, and apply themselves to God, who alone can relieve them. This makes them form steady resolutions to forsake sin, that is the fountain of all misery; and to discharge those duties, which alone can make men completely happy.

4. The middle or lower part of mankind are not commonly tainted with those capital vices, that some are guilty of, who move in a higher sphere; and therefore are better qualify'd for the reception of sacred truths, and more sincerely dispos'd to obey the divine will. It is God's holy spirit that leads men into all truth; and without his

his assistance, we shall commit mistakes, even about the most easy, and obvious matters: but the greatest innocence, and sincerity of heart, has the best title to God's co-operating Grace: on the contrary, the most wicked men banish away the Holy Spirit, and are left to the weak guidance of their own fallible reason: and very often, notwithstanding their natural abilities, reject the plainest truths, and run into such mistakes, as will prove destructive to their eternal interest, and salvation.

5. It pleased Almighty God, to call the first Christians from the lower class of mankind, as being most suitable to the all-wise, and good ends of his Providence. He chose those that were reputed foolish and ignorant, to confound the wise: and the weak things of the world, to pull down those that were mighty, and exalted. He made use of instruments, seemingly contemptible, to bring about a mighty change: that a supernatural power might be more visibly display'd, and the divine excellency of the Christian religion (*n*).

(*n*) Prædicatio Christiana non indiget pompa & cultu sermonis, ideoque Piscatores, homines imperiti electi sunt, qui Evangelizarent: ut Doctrinæ veritas ipsa se commendaret, teste virtute, ne hominum versutia, & calliditate humanæ sapientiæ acceptabilis videretur, non veritate: sicut Disciplinæ ab hominibus inventæ, in quibus non ratio, non virtus, sed verborum quæritur compositio; ac per hoc gloriam suam quærit, qui fidem Christi verbis exornare vult: obscurat enim illam splendore verborum, ut non illa, sed ipse laudetur. *Comment. ad* 1 *Cor. cap.* 1. *inter op. Ambros.*

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Had none but the great, and the mighty been employ'd in that important buſineſs, of bringing men from the power of darkneſs unto God: their ſucceſs might have been imputed to their own wiſdom, power, or abilities. Perhaps it would then have been ſuſpected, that they got converts, by bribing mens underſtandings with their ſplendour, and greatneſs; and by terrifying them into compliance, with their power. But that Chriſtianity ſhould be planted, and propagated by ſuch ordinary means: that a few illiterate Fiſhermen ſhou'd baffle all the learning of *Rome*, and *Athens*; and ſettle a Church, againſt which the gates of hell cou'd never prevail, argued their cauſe, to be the cauſe of God, and the Chriſtian religion to be of divine Original.

But tho' *not many mighty, not many noble were called* at firſt, and there were but few of the firſt converts, that cou'd boaſt either of riches, or an honourable extraction: yet in a little time, there were great numbers of people, of all ranks, and conditions of life, of great eminence, and diſtinction, that renounc'd their old Idolatry, and became the diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt. *Celſus* with his uſual front, roundly aſſerts it for a truth, that the Chriſtian ſociety conſiſted of none but poor women, and children, ſervants, paultry Mechanicks, and ſuch like (*o*): and his friend *Lucian* re-

(*o*) *Origen. contra Celſ. l.* 3. *p.* 141, 144.

preſents

presents them as a parcel of old women, widows, and fatherless children (*p*). But this is a base and malicious calumny: for if there were some that were great and honourable, amongst the very first converts to Christianity, as 'tis certain there were (*q*), and the words of the Apostle 1 *Cor.* 1. 26. imply as much: the number of converts of that superior class, must be very much increas'd, about the middle of the second century, when *Celsus* (*r*), and his cotemporary *Lucian* wrote. At the latter end of the first century, or the beginning of the second, we find by *Pliny* (*s*), there were many Christians, *Omnis ordinis, & omnis ætatis.* Of all ranks, and all ages. And can it possibly be imagin'd, that forty, or fifty years afterwards, there shou'd be no Christians, but what were of the dreggs of the people, and the lowest, and most despicable part of mankind? Not many years after *Celsus*, *Tertullian* speaks of *Clarissimos viros, & Clarissimas fœminas*, people of note and eminence of both sexes, that were Christians (*t*). and in order to divert *Scapula* from persecuting the

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(*p*) *De Mort. Peregrin. p.* 594, 5.
(*q*) *John.* 4. 53. 19. 38. *Act.* 17. 12. 34. *Act.* 13. 12; *Philip.* 4. 22. *&c.*
(*r*) *Origen. contra. Celf. l.* 1. *p.* 8.
(*s*) *Epist. ad Trajan.* 97. *l.* 10.
(*t*) *Ad Scap. cap.* 4.

Christians

Christians any longer, he tells him (*u*), how prodigiously great the number of Christians was. That among them he might find some principal, and leading men: some that were nearly related to his own friends, and of the same rank, and quality with himself.

In the first ages of the Church, when persons of distinction, of wealth, and honourable extraction, came over to the Christians, they generally laid aside their former pomp, and greatness: retir'd from the world, and liv'd in a contemptible obscutity: distributed their substance amongst their indigent brethren; and sometimes betook themselves to a mean, and sordid occupation. It was this, in all probability, that gave *Celsus*, and others a handle, to represent the Christians as an ignoble, and beggarly race of men. But to say that none of the first Christians were noble, or honourably descended, is a calumny made up of ignorance, malice, and falshood, and becomes none so well as a *Celsus*, or a *Julian* (*w*).

(*u*) Quid facies de tantis millibus hominum, tot viris ac fæminis, omnis sexus, omnis ætatis, omnis dignitatis, offerentibus se tibi? ——— Quid ipsa Carthago passura est, decimanda a te, cum —— viderit illic fortasse & tui ordinis viros & matronas, & principales quasque personas, & amicorum tuorum vel propinquos, vel amicos? *Ibid. c. 5.*

(*w*) Vide *Cyrill. contra Julian. l. 6.*

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

The charge of Magick Arts accounted for.

WE have not much reaſon to wonder, that the Primitive Chriſtians ſhou'd be charg'd with practiſing of magick arts, when the Lord of life himſelf, was ſaid to caſt out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the Devils. That our bleſſed Saviour did many great and wonderful works, the Jews themſelves cou'd not deny: but that wicked and perverſe people wou'd not acknowledge, that they proceeded from a divine and Almighty power, but blaſphemouſly aſcrib'd them to a correſpondence with ſome wicked, and infernal agent. The heathens alſo confeſs'd, that our Lord and his Apoſtles heal'd diſeaſes; gave ſight to the blind; made the dumb to ſpeak, and the lame to walk: but they reſolv'd all thoſe miraculous cures into, I know not what, magical powers, and curious, and clandeſtine arts.

Celſus, that impious, and bungling advocate for the pagan cauſe, by peruſing St. *Matthew's* Goſpel had found, that our infant Saviour was carried into *Ægypt*, to avoid the cruelty of *Herod*. Upon

on this he has the impudence to tell us (*a*), that our Lord, whilſt in *Ægypt*, learnt thoſe curious arts, by the aſſiſtance of which, he afterwards did ſo many mighty, and wonderful things. The Ægyptians, according to *Celſus*, divided a human body into thirty ſix parts (*b*); and imagin'd, that over each of theſe preſided a dæmon, or ætherial deity: and when any one part was affected, or out of order, it was only making ſupplication to the dæmon, that had the care of it, and the part wou'd be healed, and made perfectly whole. With ſuch wretched, and ridiculous ſtuff, does this wonderful Philoſopher attempt, to account for thoſe miraculous cures, perform'd by the eternal Son of God!

There were other ſtupid fables invented by the heathens, in order to depreciate the miracles wrought by the Apoſtles. Both St. *Peter*, and St. *Paul* were ſaid, to be well inſtructed in magical arts (*c*). Some ſaid the Chriſtian religion was to laſt only three hundred and ſixty five years, and that the continuance of it ſo long, was owing to *Peter*'s cutting a child of a year old in pieces, or to his great skill in clandeſtine, and magick arts (*d*). And for this the heathens produc'd a

(*a*) *Origen. contra Celſ. l.* 1. *p.* 30. *Arnob. adv. Gentes. l.* 1. *p.* 25.
(*b*) *Origen. contra Celſ. l.* 8. *p.* 416.
(*c*) *Auguſtin. de Conſenſ. Evangeliſt. l.* 1. *c.* 9, 10, 11.
(*d*) *Auguſtin. de Civit. Dei. l.* 18. *c.* 53. 54.

pretended

pretended oracle. But when the Chriſtian religion ſurviv'd that fatal period, its enemies were hard put to it for new ſubterfuges, and new inventions, to prop up their ſinking cauſe. Whatever they might ſay to the contrary, 'tis certain they were convinc'd in their own minds, that the miracles wrought by the Apoſtles, and primitive Chriſtians, were wrought by the power of God, and in the name of Jeſus Chriſt: for, in their enchantments, and diabolical tricks, they themſelves made uſe of the holy name of Jeſus (*e*); and ſometimes call'd upon the God of Abraham, of Iſaac, and of Jacob (*f*).

1. The primitive Chriſtians were call'd magicians, becauſe they did many mighty works by the aſſiſtance of God's holy ſpirit: which cou'd not be effected by any viſible, and ordinary cauſe; and were inconteſtedly ſuperior, and contrary to the ſtated laws of nature. For how long a time the Church of Chriſt was bleſs'd with thoſe extraordinary, and wonderful gifts, I cannot preciſely determine. We have ſubſtantial, and expreſs evidence of their continuance, much later than *Celſus*'s time, which is enough for my purpoſe.

About the middle of the ſecon'd century *Juſtin* tells *Trypho* (*g*), *at this day Chriſtians have the gift of*

(*e*) *Auguſtin. Expoſit. in Evangel. Johan. cap.* 1. *Tractat.* 7.
(*f*) *Origen. contra Celſ. l.* 4. *p.* 183, 184.
(*g*) *Dial. cum Tryph. p.* 308.
(*h*) *Ibid. p.* 247, 302.

Prophecy, and caſt out devils, which tremble at the name of Jeſus (*h*). There is a famous paſſage in *Irenæus* (*i*) to this purpoſe, cited by *Euſebius* (*k*). Great and many, he ſays, were thoſe gifts and graces, which the Lord conferr'd upon the faithful in his time. Some caſt out devils; and others heal'd diſeaſes by the impoſition of hands. Some rais'd the dead to life again; and others had the gift of prophecy, and of tongues. *Tertullian* ſpeaks of ſeveral honourable perſons cur'd by the Chriſtians, of divers infirmities (*l*). He tells a remarkable ſtory of one *Proculus*, that was in great favour with the Emperour *Severus*, whom he had cur'd of a diſtemper, by anointing him with oyl (*m*). In the third century *Origen* tells us, many unclean ſpirits were caſt out by prayer, and by the invocation of the name of Jeſus (*n*). He himſelf had ſeen many an one deliver'd from dreadful diſtempers, and calamities, by the name of Jeſus Chriſt: which, it was not in the power of men, or of devils, to remove (*o*). Again he ſays (*p*), when our Lord firſt began to preach, there were

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(*i*) *L.* 2. *cap.* 58.
(*k*) *Hiſt. Eccleſ. L.* 5. *cap.* 7.
(*l*) *Ad Scap. cap.* 4. *Apol. cap.* 23. *ad Scap. c.* 2.
(*m*) *Ad Scap. cap.* 4.
(*n*) *Contra Celſ. l.* 3. *p.* 133. *l.* 7. *p.* 334, 376.
(*o*) *Contra Celſ. l.* 3. *p.* 124. Vide *l.* 2. *p.* 62, 80.
(*p*) *Ibid. l.* 7. *p.* 337.

ſome

ſome viſible ſigns of the Holy Spirit, or effects of his divine, and miraculous power. After our Lord's Aſcenſion, there were more: ſome time after that fewer; but even now, there are ſome remains of that miraculous power (*q*). *Arnobius*, at the beginning of the fourth century, tells us (*r*), the name of Chriſt drives away evil ſpirits, and makes the oracles dumb. And *Lactantius*, about the ſame time ſays (*s*), at this very day, Chriſtians caſt out wicked ſpirits, by the name of their maſter, and by the ſign of the Croſs.

Thus we ſee for the firſt three hundred years (to look no further) there were ſome Chriſtians, endued with a power from on high: and by the divine aſſiſtance did many wonderful things, in the name of Jeſus Chriſt. And thoſe mighty works were perform'd openly, and in the face of the Sun. The facts were evident, and notorious, and the heathens themſelves had not the face to deny it: but they endeavour'd to account for thoſe miraculous cures in ſuch a manner, as not to hurt the intereſt of paganiſm, nor to do any honour to the Chriſtian religion. They wou'd not own thoſe mighty works to be the effect of a divine and

(*q*) Vide *Min. Fel. p.* 252, 254. *Cyprian. ad Demetrian. ad Donat. p.* 4. *Firmic. de errore profan. relig.*
(*r*) *Contra Gentes. l.* 1. *p.* 14, 27.
(*s*) *L.* 4. *cap.* 27. Vide *l.* 2. *cap.* 15. *l.* 5. *cap.* 21.

Almighty power, becauſe that was giving up at once the pagan cauſe; which right or wrong, they were reſolv'd to maintain; that was acknowledging the Lord Jeſus, in whoſe name thoſe miracles were wrought, to be truly the ſon of God: and that was diſparaging their own pretended deities, which they were ſenſible, cou'd not effect any miraculous cures. Under theſe ſtraits and perplexities, they took up a reſolution (as contrary to common ſenſe, as common juſtice) to charge the Chriſtians with clandeſtine, or magick arts. With an intercourſe, or familiarity with ſome wicked, infernal ſpirits. This I take to be the original foundation of the calumny. A calumny that begun with Chriſtianity it ſelf, and probably continu'd, as long as there were any of thoſe extraordinary, and miraculous gifts, and graces, in the Chriſtian Church.

2. The primitive hereticks were partly the occaſion of this calumny. Many of them uſed curious, and diabolical arts, and kept up an intimate familiarity with the heathen magicians, jugglers, aſtrologers, and ſuch like (*t*). *Simon* the Archheretick did ſo many ſtupendous things by his skill in magick, that by ſome people he was reputed a God (*u*); and a great many years after his death,

(*t*) *Tertul. præſcrip. ad. Hær. cap.* 43.
(*u*) *Juſtin. Apol.* 1. *Iren. adv. Hæreſ. cap.* 20.

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we are told (*w*), there were ſome hereticks who had ſuch an honour for his memory, that they ador'd his very picture, and offer'd up ſacrifices to it. The hereticks *Mark*, and *Menander*, were alſo famous magicians, that impos'd upon ignorant people, by their helliſh tricks, and deluſions (*x*). There were other hereticks of the ſame ſtamp, that pretended to do mighty feats by ſorcery, and enchantments. To keep up their reputation with the deluded populace, and to ape the miracles wrought in the name, and by the power of Jeſus Chriſt, they had recourſe to the vileſt, the blackeſt arts; and ſcrupled not to call in all the powers of darkneſs, to their aſſiſtance. Now ſince the worſt of hereticks, as we are told by *Juſtin (y)*, were called Chriſtians, 'tis probable the heathens, by obſerving the magical operations of ſome hereticks, might take occaſion to calumniate the whole Chriſtian name.

But further. The behaviour of ſome hereticks, that in reality were no magicians, was ſuch as gave the heathens ſome ſiniſter ſuſpicions. The *Valentinians*, *Baſilidians*, and ſeveral more of the *Gnoſtick* hereſy, had a barbarous and unintelligible cant, and jargon among them (*z*); which

(*w*) *Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccleſ. l.* 2. *c.* 13.
(*x*) *Juſtin. Apol.* 1. *Iren. l.* 1. *cap.* 8, 9, 21. *Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccl. lib.* 3. *cap.* 26.
(*y*) *Apol.* 1.
(*z*) *Iren. l.* 1. *c.* 18. *Euſeb. H. E. l.* 4. *c.* 7.

look'd like conjuration. Beſides, according to their abſurd Scheme, there was an innumerable company of celeſtial powers, or Governours (*a*), to whom they made their daily addreſſes, and ſupplications: which the heathens took for an invocation of dæmons, or a familiarity with infernal ſpirits. Hence *Celſus* tells us (*b*), he had ſeen ſome barbarous writings of the Chriſtians, that contain'd nothing but the *names of dæmons, and juggling tricks, or enchantments.* And in another place he ſays (*c*), the Chriſtians were able to do mighty feats, by the *name, or the invocation of certain dæmons.* By which it appears, that *Celſus* applies all the nonſenſe, and abſurdities of ſome hereticks, to the whole body of Chriſtians: and charges them all, with practiſing of magick arts, only becauſe the *Ophiani*, and other hereticks of thoſe times, behav'd themſelves like conjurers.

3. The privacy of the Chriſtian worſhip created ſome evil ſuſpicions, and help'd forward the calumny. The firſt Chriſtians had generally their religious aſſemblies in the night, at which none were allow'd to be preſent but the μύηϛοι, or thoſe that were baptiz'd. This ſecreſy, and caution, the heathens cou'd not, or wou'd not account for,

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(*a*) Vide *Iren. Epiphan. Theodoret. Hær. fab. Origen. contra Celſ. Tertul. contra Valentin. &c.*

(*b*) *Origen. contra Celſ. l. 6. p.* 302.

(*c*) *Ibid. l. 1. p.* 7.

without

without ſuppoſing ſome conſpiracy againſt the publick peace, at thoſe nocturnal meetings; or ſome magical operations, that were always managed with the utmoſt privacy, and therefore call'd *ſecret, and clandeſtine arts* (*d*). *Tertullian* diſſuades his wife, in caſe ſhe ſurviv'd him, from marrying with a heathen; and with great ſolidity of reaſoning, deſcribes the inconveniencies, that wou'd of neceſſity attend, ſo unequal a match. Amongſt other things, he tells her, a heathen husband wou'd ſuſpect her guilty of magical operations, when ſhe roſe in the night, to go to prayer; and when ſhe ſign'd her ſelf with the ſign of the croſs (*e*).

It is entirely needleſs, and impertinent, to offer at a vindication of the primitive Chriſtians; or to ſhew how innocent they were of this heavy charge. As ſoon as any heathen became a ſincere convert to the Chriſtian faith, he renounc'd the devil, and all his works: abandon'd all magical tricks, and deluſions (*f*): and thoſe that before had uſed *curious arts, brought their books, and burnt them before all men* (*g*). Whatever wicked arts, or ſuperſtitious fooleries have been practis'd, in the corrupt ages of Chriſtianity; 'tis certain,

(*d*) *Arnob. adv. Gentes. l.* 1. *p.* 25.
(*e*) *Tertul. ad uxorem. l.* 2. *cap.* 5.
(*f*) Vide *Juſtin. Apol.* 1.
(*g*) *Acts.* 19. 19.

the primitive Chriſtians ſtood clear of all imputations of that kind. They treated with a juſt abhorrence, all ſouthſayers, fortune-tellers, enchanters, and diviners of all kinds: and they are expreſly condemn'd, as wicked, and deteſtable, by ſeveral canons of the Greek church (*b*).

(*b*) Vide *Concil. Ancyr. Can.* 24. *Laod.* 36. *Trul.* 61. *Canon. Baſil.* 7, 65.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

The Hereſies, and diviſions in primitive Chriſtianity, accounted for.

THere have been in all ages of Chriſtianity ſome, that have diſturb'd the peace of the church; that have maintain'd either ſome ſingular, extravagant opinions; or without any apparent neceſſity, have made an unreaſonable ſeparation from the catholick communion. But as the primitive Chriſtians were ſome of the beſt of men; ſo the primitive hereticks were the vileſt monſters the world ever ſaw. Even while the Apoſtles were ſowing the good ſeed, the enemy ſcattered tares: but aſſoon as thoſe pillars of the truth, thoſe glorious defenders of the faith were crown'd with martyrdom, and tranſlated from this life to a better: then blaſphemous error, and impiety appear'd bareface, and made an impudent progreſs (*a*). All the united powers of hell vigorouſly engag'd, to pull down the church of Chriſt. Many agents of ſatan were ſent abroad, under the

(*a*) *Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccl. l.* 3. *c.* 32.

diſguiſe

diſguiſe of Chriſtians; who attempted to undermine the foundations of our holy faith. Thoſe enemies of all righteouſneſs, and children of the devil, did not ceaſe to pervert the right way of the Lord: and aſſuming to themſelves the title of Chriſtians, they gave both Jew and Gentile occaſion to blaſpheme (*b*). All their numberleſs errours, diviſions, and infinite contrariety of opinions, were, very unfairly, plac'd to the account of the whole Chriſtian ſociety.

Whatever thoſe vile miſcreants pretended, they had no manner of title to the honourable appellation of Chriſtians; nor were their errours any more chargeable upon primitive Chriſtianity, than pagan idolatry, or thoſe various abſurdities, maintain'd by the heathen philoſophers. Tis true, the generality of them aſſerted there was one God: but they entertaind impious, and moſt unworthy notions of the ſupreme Being (*c*). Some of them openly blaſphem'd the God of Iſrael, the Almighty Creator of the univerſe (*d*). Others call'd themſelves the ſons of God: the Saviours of mankind, and promiſed their followers an immortality (*e*). The primitive hereticks unanimouſly de-

(*b*) Vide *Juſtin. dial. cum Tryph. p.* 253. *Origen. contra Celſ. l.* 5. *p.* 272.

(*c*) *Iren. l.* 1. *c.* 19. *Clem. Alex. Strom.* 6. *p.* 802.

(*d*) *Iren. l.* 1. *c.* 28, 29. *Juſtin. Apol.* 1.

(*e*) *Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccl. l.* 3. *c.* 26. *Origen. contra Celſ. l.* 6. *p.* 282. *Iren. l.* 1. *c.* 20.

ny'd

ny'd (*f*) the incarnation of the λόγος, or divine word. They maintain'd that the Lord Jesus Christ, was neither manifested in the flesh, nor suffer'd upon the Cross in reality, *sed putative tantum*, but onely in appearance, or imagination: and hence they were stil'd *Docetæ* (*g*); and *Tertullian*, with his usual smartness, calls them (*h*) *imaginary Christians*. Many of them pretended to a more perfect degree of knowledge, than was vouchsafed either the prophets, or Apostles (*i*). Some had the impudence to put themselves upon an equality with the blessed Jesus; and others claim'd a superiority (*k*). The *Ophiani*, according to *Origen* (*l*), were so far from being Christians, that they blasphem'd our Saviour as much as *Celsus* did: and before they admitted any one a member of their society, they oblig'd him to curse the Lord Jesus Christ.

They treated the sacred Scriptures with a shameful irreverence; and eras'd, interpolated, and alter'd just as they pleas'd. Confront them with sacred scripture, and immediately they condemn'd it, as of no authority (*m*): and when

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(*f*) Secundum autem nullam sententiam hæreticorum, Verbum Dei caro factum est. *Iren. l.* 3. *c.* 11.
(*g*) *Iren. l.* 5. *c.* 1. *Ignat. Epist. ad Smyrn. ad Trall.*
(*h*) *Contra Valentin.*
(*i*) *Iren. l.* 1. *c.* 1.
(*k*) *Ibid. l.* 1. *c.* 24.
(*l*) *Contra Celsi. l.* 6. *p.* 294.
(*m*) *Iren. l.* 3. *c.* 2.

they

they cou'd find nothing in the ſacred volumes, that cou'd poſſibly be brought to countenance their errors, they made a ſcripture of their own. Out of the books of the old and new Teſtament, they ſelected ſome paſſages (*n*), of an obſcure, or ambiguous interpretation, which they wreſted to their own purpoſe. Theſe they treated with the utmoſt veneration, and reſpect: but as for the reſt, they were ſlighted, and contemn'd. The *Valentinians*, and *Marcionites* alter'd, and mangled the Goſpels (*o*), and particularly that of St. *Luke* (*p*). The *Ebionites* admitted only of St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel, and rejected all St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles, calling him an Apoſtate from the Law (*q*).

Some of them, no doubt of it, were regularly baptiz'd, but the generality of them had a form of baptiſm, of a very ſtrange, and ſingular nature, and as diſtant as poſſible from that, which was inſtituted by our bleſſed Lord. There is nothing more ſhocking, and impious, than thoſe various methods of Initiation, they made uſe of, which are ſet down at large by *Irenæus* (*r*). As for the Sacrament of the Lords Supper, they entirely

(*n*) *Clem. Alex. Strom.* 3. *p.* 528. *Strom.* 7. *p.* 891, 893.
(*o*) *Origen. contra Celſ. l.* 2. *p.* 77.
(*p*) *Iren. l.* 3. *c.* 11.
(*q*) *Iren. l.* 1. *c.* 26.
(*r*) *Adv. Hæreſ. l.* 1. *c.* 18.

neglected

neglected it (*s*). For the Eucharistical bread and wine, being a mystical representation of our Lord's body that was broken, and of his blood that was shed upon the Cross; they cou'd not celebrate the Eucharist, seeing they deny'd the reality of Christ's sufferings, without contradicting their own wicked notions, and confuting of themselves.

Their morals were as corrupt, and as scandalous, as their principles. They neither believ'd nor acted, in any one respect, like Christians. Nor indeed were they ever treated by the primitive Church, as mistaken, or erroneous Christians: but as a pack of profligate pagans, atheists, monsters, and emissaries of the devil. The Christians declin'd all commerce, or society with them (*t*): which offended them very much, and raised many heavy complaints (*u*). *Polycarp*, accidentally meeting with the heretick *Marcion*, call'd him *Primogenitus Satanæ*, *the first born of Satan.* We are told that St. *John* was once a going into the Bath at *Ephesus*, but espying the heretick *Cerinthus* there, he started back; and said, *he was afraid the bath wou'd tumble*

(*s*) Ευχαριστίας καὶ προσευχῆς (l. προσφορᾶς) ἀπέχονται, διὰ τὸ μὴ ὁμολογεῖν τὴν Ευχαριστίαν σάρκα εἶναι τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ιησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τὴν ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν παθοῦσαν. *Ignat. Epist. ad Smyrn. cap.* 7.

(*t*) *Justin. Dial. cum Tryph. p.* 253. *Iren. l.* 3. *c.* 3.

(*u*) Querunrur de nobis, quod cum similia nobiscum sentiant, sine causa abstineamus nos a communicatione eorum: & cum eadem dicant, & eandem habeant doctrinam, vocemus illos hæreticos. *Iren. l.* 3. *c.* 15.

down,

down, becauſe ſuch an enemy of the truth was in it (*w*). In a word, thoſe hereticks were not Chriſtians in any ſenſe, or degree whatſoever: nor were they ever reputed ſo, by the primitive Chriſtians. They were as much enemies to the truth, and at as great a diſtance from it, even as that vile impoſtor *Mahomet*, who ſeems to have imitated, in many particulars, thoſe primitive hereticks (*x*).

2. The primitive hereticks were not by far ſo numerous, as has been repreſented. 'Tis true, we have the names of above twenty hereſies in the two firſt centuries; but then we are to obſerve, that one and the ſame hereſy frequently went under different names. Thus the *Carpocratians*, *Valentinians*, &c, were alſo call'd *Gnoſticks*, from their pretended ſuperiority in knowledge: and *Borboritæ*, from their filthy converſation. Thoſe that condemn'd marriage, and certain meats, as unlawful, were call'd *Tatiani*, *Severiani*, and *Continentes*. And, to give but one inſtance more, the *Montaniſts* were alſo ſtyl'd *Cataphrygians*, *Pepuzians*, *Priſcillians*, *Quintillians*, &c. This diverſity of names, ſeems to have led ſome authors into miſtakes: and has put them upon writing a catalogue of more hereſies, than in reality there ever were.

Beſides, The erroneous Tenets propagated by the primitive hereticks, are reducible to a very

(*w*) *Iren. l.* 3. *cap.* 3.
(*x*) Vide *Hiſt. of Montaniſm. chap.* 19.

few

few heads: and ſtrictly ſpeaking, there were not above three, or four hereſies, for the firſt two hundred years. For, every ſucceeding heretick refind upon his maſter; was ambitious of making new diſcoveries; made ſome little alterations, or additions, and was fond of giving a new name to a hereſy, that was onely an old one, in a new dreſs. That this was the caſe, we are told by *Irenæus* (*y*), an author, of indiſputable credit, and great antiquity. *Menander* was *Simon*'s diſciple, and made ſome emprovements upon his maſter's ſcheme. *Saturninus* copied after *Menander* (*z*); but took the liberty of making ſome variations, and changing the name of the hereſy. Thoſe that ſucceeded, went on in the ſame method; ſo that there might be the names of an hundred hereſies, tho' all grafted upon one common ſtock, and without varying from one another, in the moſt material, and eſſential points.

3. Moſt of the hereſies in the two firſt centuries continued but a little time. There was always indeed one hereſy or other on foot; but the

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(*y*) Ab his autem qui prædicti ſunt jam multæ propagines multarum hæreſum factæ ſunt, eo quod multi ex ipſis, immo omnes volunt Doctores eſſe, & abſcedere quidem ab hæreſi in qua fuerunt. Aliud autem dogma ab alia ſententia, & deinceps alteram ab altera componentes, nova docere inſiſtunt, ſemetipſos adinventores ſententiæ quamcunque compegerint, enarrantes. *Iren. l. 1. cap.* 30. vide *cap.* 18. vide *Theodoret. de Simon. Epiphan. de Menan.*

(*z*) *Iren. l. 1. cap.* 22. *Euſeb. H. E. l. 4. cap.* 7.

elder

elder commonly gave place to the younger; and the preceding heresy was lost, and absorb'd, in the following one (*a*). Thus *Cerinthianism* was lost in *Cerdonism*, and *Cerdonism* in *Marcionism*. The *Simonians*, strictly so call'd, were of a very short continuance (*b*): and the *Menandrians* the same (*c*). *Origen* tells us, there were not thirty *Simonians* in the whole world, in his time (*d*): and his meaning is, he did not know of any: for in another place he says, ἀλλαμοῦ γὲ τῆς οἰκουμένης Σιμωνιανοί. *There are no Simonians in any part of the world* (*e*). Several of those heresies were extinct, almost as soon as they appear'd (*f*): and there were but very few of them, that long surviv'd their impious authors. The *Montanist* heresy kept its ground a long time, and scattered its contagion in many distant places. And the reason was this; *Montanus*, and his followers, pretended to an uncommon sanctity, and a more than ordinary strictness of Discipline. Their agitations, and exstasies were very surprizing, and astonishing; and pass'd, with many weak, and well meaning Christians, for the operations of the Holy Spirit. But the *Gnosticks* were such a crew of

(*a*) *Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l.* 4. *cap.* 7.
(*b*) *Theodoret. Fab. Haret. l.* 1.
(*c*) *Epiphan. Hæres.* 22.
(*d*) *Contra. Celf. l.* 1. *p.* 44.
(*e*) *L.* 6. *p.* 282.
(*f*) *Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l.* 6. *cap.* 37, 38. *Origen. con. Celf. l.* 6. *p.* 282.

profligate

profligate debauchees, that no man of sobriety cou'd like them. And their Tenets were so extravagantly absurd, that no one cou'd possibly, for any long time, be impos'd upon by them, that had but a common share of understanding.

The causes of heresy, that were more peculiar to the first ages of the church (not to mention those that are common to all times, as ignorance, and a corruption of manners, passion, and prejudice, interest, and ambition, singularity, and ostentation) are these.

First, Many of the converts to Christianity came from the schools of the philosophers; who retaining a high veneration for their masters, were for blending their philosophical notions, with the truth of God. When a man change's his religion (which is commonly done with too much hast and precipitancy) he either runn's into an opposite extream, thinking he cannot get at too great a distance from that he dislikes; or he stopp's short, and is for compounding, and incorporating the old religion with the new. We have many instances of mistakes, and miscarriages of both kinds. The *Ebionites* and *Nazaræan* hereticks, were Jewish converts, that paid a mighty regard to the *Mosaick* institutions: they kept the Jewish sabbaoth, and strictly observ'd many legal rites and ceremonies *(g)*, and seem'd desirous of being members at once both of the old

(g) Origen. Con. Celf. l. 5. p. 272. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l. 3. c. 29.

covenant and the new. On the other hand there were ſome, that thought they cou'd not poſſibly fly too far from Judaiſm: they cou'd not think it allowable to imitate the Jews, in any thing whatever, ſince they were the κυριοκτόνοι, or murderers of the Lord of life. To celebrate the paſchal ſolemnity, according to the Jewiſh computation, was reputed unlawful; and a mighty pother, and a fierce contention was rais'd on this account, between the Aſiatick, and the weſtern Churches.

Some of the gentile converts, out of an honeſt, but indiſcreet zeal, and hatred againſt every thing, that was heatheniſh, condemn'd philoſophy, as the invention of the devil; and prohibited the reading of all prophane authors. But the numbers on the other hand, were infinitely greater, of thoſe who were for grafting Chriſtianity upon pagan Theology, and attempted to reconcile their darling philoſophy, and poetical dreams, with the revealed will of God. We may trace the heathen poet, or philoſopher, in many of thoſe heretical fables, that were propagated in the primitive ages: and if a book on this ſubject, written by St. *Apollinaris*, the famous biſhop of *Hierapolis*, had been extant at this day; we ſhou'd have been able to have demonſtrated, from what ſect of Philoſophy, every particular hereſy drew its errors. As ſeveral of the firſt hereticks were well acquainted with the philoſophical

phical sciences (*h*), so we learn from *Tertullian* (*i*); that heresy was the off-spring of philosophy; and came originally from the schools of *Aristotle*, *Plato*, *Epicurus*, and the *Stoicks*. *Marcion's* two original Beings, the one good, the other evil, is nothing but a piece of Stoicism. *Valentinus* intermix'd *Platonism* (*k*), with his heretical nonsense; and his *Cosmogony* is nothing but a poetical tale, badly told. *Basilides* enjoyn'd his scholars a five years silence, after the manner of *Pythagoras* (*l*): and the *Continentes* abstaining from the flesh of all animals, was probably, in imitation of that philosopher (*m*). The fables of the *Gnosticks* were borrow'd, as *Irenæus* rightly observes (*n*), from the heathen poets, and more particularly from *Homer* (*o*).

Secondly, Persecution for righteousness sake, tho' it wonderfully contributed towards the propagation of the Christian faith, and settled it upon a firm, and lasting foundation; yet was it the occasion of some heretical errours in the first ages. When a man is in danger of losing his life for the

(*h*) *Cerinthus. Valentinus. Epiphanes. Tatianus, &c.*
(*i*) *Apol. cap.* 47. *Præscrip. adv. Hæret. cap.* 7.
(*k*) *Tertull. Præscrip. adv. Hæret. c.* 7.
(*l*) *Agrippa Castor. apud Euseb. H. Eccl. l.* 4. *c.* 7.
(*m*) *Ibid.*
(*n*) *Adv. Hæres. l.* 2. *cap.* 19.
(*o*) *Ibid. l.* 4 *cap.* 58.

ſake of his religion, frail human nature too often gets the aſcendant, and makes him faſhion his religion agreeably to his eaſe, his intereſt, and ſecurity. There goes a remarkable ſtory (*p*) of one *Theodotus* of *Byzantium*, who being apprehended by the heathen perſecutors, was brought under a neceſſity, of parting either with his life, or his religion. The love of life prevail'd, and the miſerable wretch openly deny'd his Lord and Saviour, Jeſus Chriſt. Aſham'd of what he had done, he went to *Rome*, hoping to lie there conceal'd: but one of his acquaintance met with him, and charged him with his infamous apoſtaſy. His anſwer was, he had not deny'd God, but man: and being ask'd what man, he reply'd, the man Jeſus Chriſt. Thus to vindicate himſelf, he commenc'd a heretick; and purely with a deſign to extenuate his crime, he ever after maintain'd, that the Lord Jeſus Chriſt was merely man. It was an avow'd principle amongſt the primitive hereticks, that Martyrdom was a fooliſh and unneceſſary thing, and not agreeable to the will of our holy Redeemer (*q*): but the true foundation of that pretended perſuaſion, was this: not one of them ever had the courage, or the conſtancy, to ſuffer for the truth. Tell them of their offering ſacrifices to idols; and of their denying the faith, in time of

(*p*) *Epiphan. adv. Hæreſ. l.* 2. *Tom.* 1. *p.* 463.
(*q*) Vide *Tertul. Scorpiac. adv. Gnoſtic.*

perſecu-

perſecutions; their anſwer was, thoſe things were matters of indifferency (*r*), and they were entirely at liberty, to act juſt as they pleas'd. Thus ſelf-preſervation was the parent of hereſy, and to avoid a temporal inconvenience men run into errours.

Perſecution in another reſpect was the cauſe of hereſy. Repeated hardſhips and miſeries turn'd the heads of ſome weaker Chriſtians, and made them delirant, as in a fever. Melancholy retirement frequently gives birth to viſions, and Enthuſiaſm; and a man by ſuffering much, and dwelling too long, upon the melancholy ſide of religion, may be ſeiz'd at laſt with a religious phrenzy. The Reveries of the *Montaniſts* look like the product of a melancholy, retir'd, and mortify'd way of life. The *Cathari*, or *Novatians*, who finally rejected the penitent *Lapſi* from communion, ſeem to have been a ſet of people, that were ſower'd with ſufferings, and were for reducing the Chriſtian religion to a conformity with their own moroſe, and inflexible diſpoſitions.

There has rarely happen'd any perſecution in the Chriſtian world, but a ſpirit of enthuſiaſm has immediately appear'd. At the beginning of the reformation, during the religious wars in *Germany*, there were ſwarms of Enthuſiaſts, who broach'd

(*r*) *Agrip. Caſtor. apud Euſeb. H Eccl. l. 4. c. 7. Origen. con. Celſ. l. 6. p. 282.*

ſuch blaſphemous opinions, as cou'd be the effect of nothing, but downright madneſs (*s*). We have lately obſerv'd, in a neighbouring nation, ſome Proteſtants *dragoon'd* into a ſort of religious madneſs; who after they had endur'd many hardſhips, and had been depriv'd of their civil, and religious rights, pretended to prophecy, and inſpiration. There were many of our own nation, who, to avoid the ſcandalous cruelties of Queen *Mary's* reign, fled into foreign countries. There they made many ſorrowful reflections upon their own ſufferings, and thoſe of their countrymen; which whetted their reſentments againſt Popery, that cruel and ſanguinary religion, and gave them an irreconcileable averſion to every thing, that came from Rome. Hence they quarrell'd with the reformation made in King *Edwards* reign, as too nearly ally'd to the church of Rome. In this melancholy exile (*t*), they laid a plan for a ſeparation, that has unhappily continu'd to this very day.

If we conſider, what barbarous oppreſſions the firſt Chriſtians met with: what manifold temptations they lay under to deny the faith: what obſtinate prejudices were entail'd upon thoſe, who came from the ſchools of the philoſophers, into the Church of Chriſt; we need not be under any ſurprize, to find the primitive ages infected with

(*s*) Vide *Sleidan. Commentar. de Stat. Relig.*
(*t*) *Heylin's Hiſt. of the Reformat. & Mary's Reign.*

hereſy.

hereſy. It is rather a matter of wonder, that the orthodox faith ſhou'd be able to keep its ground, when attack'd by ſo many ſecret, and open enemies: and that the ſincere, and genuine Chriſtians, ſhou'd almoſt as far outgoe the hereticks in numbers, as they did in the goodneſs of their cauſe. Our bleſſed Lord, and his Apoſtles expreſly foretold, that there wou'd ariſe *falſe Chriſts, and falſe prophets.* That *ſome wou'd depart from the faith, giving heed to ſeducing ſpirits, and doctrines of devils.* And St. *Paul* declares to the *Corinthians, there muſt be hereſies, that they which are approv'd, may be made manifeſt among you* (*u*).

(*u*) 1 *Cor.* 11. 19.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

The charge of corrupting the Sibyllin Oracles accounted for.

WHether the preſent eight books of Sibyllin Oracles are one entire piece of pious fraud, and the ſpurious production of ſome weak, or wicked Chriſtian: or whether they contain the genuine predictions of the ancient Sibylls, with ſome corruptions and interpolations, is a controverſy amongſt the learned, not yet decided. *Celſus*, who flouriſh'd about the middle of the ſecond century, is the firſt, that taxeth the Chriſtians with interpolating the Sibyllin Oracles (*a*). The ſame charge was afterwards carried on by ſeveral others, as we learn from *Lactantius*, the Emperour *Conſtantine*, and St. *Auſtin* (*b*). Whoever will peruſe the preſent collection of Sibyllin Oracles, with any tole-

(*a*) *Origen. contra Celſ. l. 7. p. 368, 9.*
(*b*) *Lactan. de vera Sapientia. l. 4. c. 15. Conſtantin. Orat: ad Sanctor. cæt. c. 19. Auguſtin. de Civit. Dei. l. 18. c. 46, 47.*

rable

rable attention, muſt meet with many evident marks of forgery; ſo that I cannot forbear pitying the weakneſs, and credulity of thoſe, who ſtifly contend for the legitimacy, of the whole collection of thoſe pretended Oracles.

We there find an account of the Creation of the world, the fall of our firſt parents, the ark of Noah, the deluge of waters (*c*), the tower of Babel, *&c.* all undoubtedly taken from the book of Geneſis. The hiſtorical books of the new Teſtament have alſo furniſhed the forger of thoſe Oracles, with ſeveral pretended prophecies concerning our ſaviour. The manner of our Lord's nativity, his life and actions, his tryal and ſufferings, his reſurrection and aſcenſion, are deſcrib'd with much plainneſs and particularity; which makes it more than probable, that ſeveral of thoſe Oracles, relating to our bleſſed Saviour, are not predictions of future events, but hiſtorical narrations of facts, that were already paſt, and gone. The author, in order to diſguiſe the impoſture, is ſomething ænigmatical, in his account of the Roman Emperours (*d*). He deſcribes them all, from *Julius* to *Adrian*, chiefly by the initial letter of their names. There is mention made of three ſucceſſors to *Adri-*

(*c*) The pretended Sibyl ſays (*l.* 1. *p.* 182. *l.* 3. *p.* 283.) ſhe was wife to one of *Noah*'s ſons, and was with him in the ark.

(*d*) Vide *l.* 5.

an,

an, which has occasion'd a conjecture (*e*), that the present collection of Sibyllin Oracles was made in the reign of the *Antonine* family.

Opsopæus, the learned Editor of the Sibyllin Oracles has substantially prov'd (*f*), that many of them at least, were forg'd after our Lord's ascension. But he attempts, to set the original date of some of them too low: and his zeal to convict them of forgery, has led him into some mistakes. *Sibyl*, he tells us, asserts (*g*), that she had seen the second temple of *Vesta* consum'd by fire: and from thence we are to infer, that the author of the Sibyllin Oracles, liv'd after the year of our Lord 199; when, according to *Eusebius*'s computation, that temple was burnt down. But *Fabricius* has corrected this mistake; and has prov'd (*h*), that it is not *Vesta*'s second temple, burnt in the reign of *Commodus*; but the second temple at Jerusalem, destroy'd in *Vespasian*'s time, that is mention'd in the Sibyllin verses. The author of them is charged by *Opsopæus*, with espousing one of *Origen*'s heterodox notions, *viz.* that the torments of the damn'd shall not be eternal: and consequently is suppos'd, to be *Origen*'s cotemporary, in the third century, if not later. Now the passage cited by

(*e*) *Cav. Hist. Lit. Prideaux. Connec. Vol.* 2. *l.* 9.
(*f*) *Præfat. & Not.*
(*g*) *L.* 5. *p.* 332.
(*h*) *Biblioth. Græc. Tom.* 1. *l.* 1. *c.* 32. *p.* 209.

Opsopæus,

Opſopæus, and upon which he produces a marginal remark from an old manuſcript, does not, in my opinion, make good the charge. 'Tis ſaid in that place (*i*), that Almighty God at the requeſt of the righteous, ſhall deliver men from the conſuming fire; by which we are to underſtand a ſort of purgatorial fire, through which all men, whether good or bad, are to paſs; and from which, the righteous alone ſhall be deliver'd, upon making their humble ſupplication to Almighty God. This interpretation will be confirm'd, if we look a little backward (*k*); where the pretended Sibyl declares thus: *All ſhall paſs through a burning lake of unquenchable fire. All the righteous ſhall be ſav'd, or deliver'd out of it; but the wicked ſhall be deſtroy'd in it, to all eternity.* This, I confeſs, is an odd, and extravagant notion: but it is either none of *Origen's*, or not peculiar to him, or to the times he liv'd in; and conſequently does not prove, that the author of that paſſage, cited by *Opſopæus*, liv'd in the third century.

It is ſaid in the fifth and eighth books of *Sibyllin* Oracles (*l*), that after *Adrian* three ſhall reign, that is *Antoninus Pius*, *Antoninus* the Philoſopher, and *Lucius Verus*, and then ſhall be the end of all

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(*i*) *L.* 2. *p.* 212. *Paris. Edit.* 1607.

(*k*) Καὶ τότε δὴ πάντες διὰ διθομένυ ποταμοῖο,
Καὶ φλογὸς ἀσβέστυ διεκεύσονθ'· ὅι τε δίκαιοι
Πάντες σωθήσονθ', ἀσεβεῖς δ' ἐπὶ τοῖσιν ὀλοῦνται
Εἰς Αἰῶνας Ὅλυς. *L.* 2. *p.* 207.

(*l*) *P.* 304, 367.

things.

things. From whence it is evident, that the author of thoſe paſſages cou'd not be later than the reign of *M. Antoninus*, the laſt of the three abovemention'd Emperours. For, it wou'd be ridiculous, to ſuppoſe that the author ſhou'd fix the end, and conſummation of all things, to the concluſion of *M. Antoninus*'s reign, and tell us ſo, after the accompliſhment of that period. How long thoſe verſes were written before the death of *M. Antoninus* I cannot preciſely tell: but if I may be allow'd to add one conjecture to many, that have been offer'd upon this head, I would ſuppoſe, this to be done ſometime, between the death of *Lucius Verus*, and the death of *M. Antoninus*. For the pretended Sibyl tells us (*m*), the third and laſt of thoſe three Emperours, that ſucceeded *Adrian*, ſhall have the whole ſovereign power in his own hands, ὀψὲ *late*, that is *M. Antoninus* ſhall have partners in the Empire, for ſeveral years, and at laſt ſhall reign alone. This was true in fact: but how he came to the knowledge of this; or how he cou'd tell, whether *Marcus*, or *Lucius*, was the third, and laſt Emperour, I cannot concieve, without ſuppoſing, that he ſurviv'd *Lucius Verus Antoninus*. I therefore conclude, that the fifth, and eighth books of Sibyllin Oracles, or part of them at leaſt, were

(*m*) *L.* 5. *p.* 304.

written

written after the death of *Lucius*, and before the death of *M. Antoninus*, about the year of our Lord, 170.

It has been obſerv'd by a very learned, and eminent author, *that the preſent collection of Oracles was made, between the year of your Lord* 138, *and the year* 167. *It cou'd not be earlier, for therein mention is made of the next ſucceſſor of* Adrian, *that is* Antoninus Pius, *who did not ſucceed him, till the year* 138. *And it cou'd not be later, becauſe* Juſtin *Martyr in his writings, ſeveral times quotes it, and appeals to it, who did not out live the year* 167 (*n*).

This obſervation is built upon a ſuppoſition, that *Juſtin* had ſeen, and quoted that very collection of Sibyllin Oracles, we have at preſent; which is by no means probable. Some of *Juſtin's* quotations, I confeſs, agree with the preſent collection: nay further, it muſt be own'd that thoſe pretended prophecies in our Sibyllin Oracles, relating to our Saviour, ſpeak of him (in exact agreement with *Juſtin's* account of them) not in a typical allegorical way, but *plainly, and openly* (*o*). But this is far from amounting to a proof, that the entire eight books of Sibyllin Oracles were extant in *Juſtin's* time; before the year of our Lord 167. For by this way of reaſoning, we

(*n*) *Prideaux. Connec. vol.* 2. *L.* 9. *p.* 626.
(*o*) *Juſtin. Cohortat. ad Græc.*

might

might carry the date of them back as far as *Vespasian's* time; because *Josephus* cites (*p*) a passage from the Sibyllin Oracles, the substance of which, we find in our present collection (*q*). The eight books of Sibyllin Oracles were undoubtedly patch'd up, and collected at different times, and by different hands: and as some of them are older than our Saviour's time, so there are others as late as the reign of the *Antonine* family; and some parts of them much later still.

We can never suppose, that *Justin* took our present collection for the genuine predictions of the ancient Sibylls; without taxing that holy and learned Martyr with weakness, ignorance, and credulity, to a great degree. Who can imagine, he shou'd call so gross an imposture, and recent a forgery, the production of his own times, the most ancient Oracles of the Sibylls, that were dispers'd all over the world (*r*)? Besides, the Sibyllin Oracles, as cited by *Theophilus*, *Athenagoras*, and others, who wrote after *Justin*, were different from those we have at present: from whence I infer, that the collection now extant, was not seen, and appeal'd to by *Justin*. But further. The Acrostick in the eighth book, seem's to be of a more modern date, than most of the rest of those

(*p*) *Antiq. Jud. l.* 1. *c.* 5.
(*q*) *Sibyll. Orac. l.* 3. *p.* 223, 4.
(*r*) *Justin. Cohortat. ad Græc.*

pretended

pretended Oracles. For, the Emperour *Conſtantine* in the fourth century, is the firſt, that mentions it. The initial letters in that Acroſtick, make up the following words, Ἰησοῦς. Χριστὸς. Θεοῦ υἱὸς Σωτὴρ. Σταυρὸς. *Jeſus Chriſt, the Son of God, the Saviour, the Croſs* (*s*). Here is a plain deſcription of our bleſſed Lord, even by his very Name: which yet is not once taken notice of, for the firſt three hundred years. But the fathers of the ſecond and third centuries, had that Acroſtick been extant, and reputed genuine in their days, cou'd not have forgot to urge ſo expreſs, and illuſtrious a teſtimony, in their diſputes with the heathens.

Some are of opinion that *Tertullian* alludes (*t*) to this Acroſtick, when he calls our Saviour ἰχθὺς. which word is compos'd of the initial letters of theſe greek words, Ἰησοῦς, Χριστὸς, Θεοῦ υἱὸς, Σωτὴρ. *Jeſus Chriſt, the ſon of God, the Saviour.* But what reaſon there is to ſuppoſe, that *Tertullian* referr's to thoſe Sibyllin verſes, written in the Acroſtick way, I cannot conceive. He does not once mention that Acroſtick. Beſides, the word ἰχθὺς (which ſignifies a fiſh) is nothing but a trifling conceit, ariſing from a whimſical conjunction of five initial letters, taken from words that were

(*s*) *Sibyll. Orac. l.* 8. *p.* 380. *Conſtantin. Orat. ad Sanctor. Cæt. c.* 19.

(*t*) Sed nos piſciculi ſecundum Ἰχθὺν noſtrum Jeſum Chriſtum, in aqua naſcimur. *De Baptiſmo. c.* 1.

very

very common, and to be met with in ten thousand places, besides the eighth book of Sibyllin Oracles. *Lactantius*, who wrote about an hundred years after *Tertullian*, paid a great regard to the Sibyllin Oracles; and made frequent appeals to them; and yet as to this Acrostick he is perfectly silent. Nay he quotes (*u*) the eighth line in this Acrostick; but instead of ῥίψουσιν (*they shall throw down*) where the initial letter ῥ makes up the second letter in the word Χριστὸς; he sets down τείψουσιν (*they shall break to pieces*) which effectually spoils the Acrostick (*w*).

The Emperour *Constantine* stiffly contends for the great antiquity, and the genuine authority of this Acrostick (*x*). He calls in *Cicero*, as an impartial witness on his side: who in the opinion of most learned men, says nothing at all in his favour. The Acrostick mention'd by *Cicero*, was widely different (as Dr. *Prideaux* has (*y*) very rightly observ'd) from that which we find in the eighth book of Sibyllin Oracles. Besides *Cicero* tells us, that the Sibyl (or whoever else it was, that had a hand in the framing of that Oracle, which declar'd that the Romans must have a king, if they wou'd be safe) acted very cunningly in not

(*u*) *L. 7. cap. 19.*
(*w*) Vide *Not. Opsop. in Sibyll. Orac. p. 65.*
(*x*) *Orat ad Sanctor. cæt. cap. 19.*
(*y*) *Connec. Part. 2. Book. 9. p. 628.*

naming

naming of times, and persons (*z*): by which means the Oracle was capable of various, and uncertain interpretations; and was applicable to different purposes. But in our Sibyllin Acrostick, Jesus Christ, the son of God, is expresly nam'd: and in another place, the time is precisely fix'd for the coming of this great, and immortal King, *viz.* when Ægypt shall be added to the Roman Empire (*a*).

That several things contain'd in the present collection, were extant long before *Justin*'s time, is evident enough. Among our Sibyllin Oracles, we find many passages, that agree with the writings of *Orpheus*, *Homer*, and some others of the ancient Greek Poets (*b*). But whether those Poets borrow'd from the Sibylls, or the pretended Sibylls from them, remains an uncertainty. *Herodotus* (*c*), *Strabo* (*d*), and others, cite some Greek verses, as from an ancient heathen Oracle, which we find at this day amongst our Sibyllin Oracles.

(*z*) Hoc si est in libris, in quem hominem, & in quod tempus est? Callide enim qui illa composuit, perfecit, ut quodcunque accidisset, prædictum videretur, *hominum & temporum definitione sublata. De Divinat. l.* 2.

(*a*) Αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ Ῥώμη καὶ Αἰγύπτου βασιλεύσει,
Εἷς ἐν ἀθύνασα, τότε δὴ βασιλεία μεγίστη
Ἀθανάτου Βασιλῆος ἐπ' ἀνθρώποισι φανεῖται.
Lib. 2. *p.* 219.

(*b*) Vide *Fabric. Biblioth. Græc. l.* 1. *c.* 33. *p.* 217.

(*c*) *L.* 1. *c.* 47. Vide *Sibyll. Orac. l.* 8. *p.* 392.

(*d*) *Geograph. l.* 1. *p.* 36. Vide *Orac. Sibyll. l.* 4. *p.* 292.

Many more inſtances of this kind might be produced, which make it evident, even to demonſtration, that the entire eight books of Sibyllin Oracles now extant, cou'd not be the invention of ſome Chriſtian impoſtor, or the forgery of the ſecond century.

There has been an objection urg'd againſt the authority of the Sibyllin Oracles, which is taken from the ſilence of the Apoſtles. It is agreed that the heathens held the ancient Oracles of the Sibylls in high eſteem: and if any in the Apoſtolick age had ſpoke of our bleſſed Saviour, in as ſtrong, and expreſs terms, as ours do; their authority wou'd frequently have been urg'd with ſucceſs, and they muſt have contributed very much towards the converſion of an infidel. But ſince the Apoſtles make no appeals to the Sibyllin Oracles, 'tis concluded that they had either no exiſtence, or at leaſt, no reputation or authority, in the Apoſtolick age.

But to this it is anſwer'd, *Firſt*. The Epiſtles of St. *Paul*, and of the reſt of the Apoſtles, are directed not to infidels, but to Chriſtians (*e*): and conſequently no ſuch arguments are to be expected there, as were proper for the converſion of an unbeliever. Inſtead of diſſuaſives from heatheniſh idolatry, and ſuperſtition. Inſtead of proofs, that the Lord Jeſus was the Meſſiah, taken from

(*e*) *Montague's Acts and Monuments. c.* 3. *p.* 209.

Prophecy,

Prophecy, and Miracles (which to an actual believer wou'd have been entirely superfluous) we find in the sacred writings, exhortations to righteousness and holyness: to a continuance in well-doing, and a perseverance in the faith. Cautions against error, and imposture: and rewards, and punishments propos'd, to encourage men to stand fast in the faith, and to keep them within the bounds of their duty. As to the Acts of the Apostles, they give us a short history of the first settlement of Christianity. But we are to observe, that the Apostles, when they first preach'd the Gospel, had to do chiefly with the Jews: who in all probability, were not to be won over by any appeals to the Sibyllin Oracles. Besides, the Acts of the Apostles contain in reality, little more than the Acts of St. *Paul:* nay the history of that great Apostle, given us by St. *Luke*, is very short, and defective. St. *Paul*, I confess, seems to have had a favourable opportunity *(f)*, of citing the Sibyllin Oracles, in his dispute with the *Athenians:* but who can tell, what substantial reasons there might be for such an omission? Or might not the historian, for the sake of brevity, pass by such a citation, as well as omit several other particulars, relating to that dispute? Many things were said,

(f) Vide *Valef. Annotat. in cap.* 18. *l.* 5. *Euseb. de vit. Constant.*

and many things written by the holy Apoſtles, which we have no account of. We know very little of the method they purſued: or of the arguments they urg'd in preaching the Goſpel: which doubtleſs, they varied, according to the different capacities, and diſpoſitions of the people, they were concern'd with. The ſilence therefore of the Apoſtles in this caſe, is far from being a proof, that they never appeal'd to the Sibyllin Oracles.

A ſecond anſwer to the abovemention'd objection is this. 'Tis ſaid, the Apoſtles in their preaching to the Gentiles, did actually refer them to the Sibyllin Oracles. *Clement* of *Alexandria*, a moſt learned Father, tells us (*g*), that Almighty God being willing, the Jews ſhou'd be ſav'd, gave them prophets; and alſo rais'd up from amongſt the worthieſt of the Greeks, prophets of their own. This he ſays evidently appears, not only from the preaching of *Peter* (a book of that name) but alſo from the words of St. *Paul*, who ſpeaks thus. *Take the Greek books, conſider how Sibyl ſpeaks of One God, and of things which are to come. Take and read Hyſtaſpes. You'll find he deſcribes, more plainly and expreſly, the Son of God, and that oppoſition made againſt Chriſt by the Kings of the earth, who hate him, and all that bear his name.*

(*g*) *Strom.* 6. *c.* 5. *p.* 761.

This

This quotation is taken from a book now loſt, but extant in the time of *Clement* of *Alexandria*. The Κήρυγμα Πέτρε, *the preaching of Peter*, which Doctor *Grabe* ſuppoſeth (*h*), was joined to the preaching of *Paul*, was a book of no contemptible character; and was frequently cited by ſeveral very ancient fathers of the church. Notwithſtanding ſome heretical interpolations, it contain'd ſeveral curious Apoſtolical remains. Whether or no the paſſage juſt mention'd, is of that kind, I cannot ſay. *Clement* of *Alexandria* declares for the affirmative; and we muſt allow him to be a witneſs of great ſignificancy, whether we conſider his learning, or the times that he liv'd in. Beſides, there is no manner of improbability, in ſuppoſing that St. *Peter*, and St. *Paul* quoted the Sibyllin Oracles; when St. *Clement* of Rome, the companion of the Apoſtles, expreſly did it, in his famous Epiſtle to the Corinthians (*i*). We do not

(*h*) *Spicileg. Patr. Tom.* 1. *p.* 66, 67. Vide *Lactan. l.* 4. *cap.* 21.

(*i*) Εἰ τῆς παρούσης καταστάσεως τὸ τέλος ἐστὶν, ἡ διὰ τοῦ πυρὸς κρίσις τῶν ἀσεβῶν καθά φασιν οἱ γεγραφὸς προφητῶν καὶ Ἀποστόλων, ἔτι ὃ καὶ τῆς Σιβύλλης, καθώς φησιν ὁ μακάριος Κλήμης ἐν τῇ πρὸς Κορινθίους Ἐπιστολῇ. *Quæſt.* 74. *ad Orthodox. inter Op. Juſtin.*

Since this paſſage, concerning the end and conſummation of all things, and the judgment of the wicked by fire, is pretty much of a piece with the following lines in Ovid; I cannot forbear thinking, that the Poet had his notion of the conflagration of the world from the Sibyllin Oracles.

Eſſe quoque in fatis reminiſcitur affore tempus,
Quo mare, quo tellus, correptaque regia Cæli
Ardeat; & mundi moles operoſa laboret.

Metamorph. l. 1.

now meet with that quotation from the Sibyllin Oracles, in his Epiſtle: and the reaſon is this. There is but one manuſcript copy of that Epiſtle, remaining in the world, as far as we know, and that imperfect: but that the quotation was originally in *Clement*'s Epiſtle, we have no reaſon to doubt (*k*).

It will perhaps be allow'd, that ſome of thoſe Oracles, in the collection now extant, were not only prior to the incarnation of the Meſſiah, but were alſo cited in the Apoſtolick age: but there is ſtarted another difficult queſtion, *viz.* whether any of thoſe Oracles, that were indiſputably prior to our Saviour's incarnation, did prædict the advent, or give any character, or deſcription of the Meſſiah. The Oracles cited by *Herodotus*, *Strabo*, St. *Clement*, *Joſephus*, and ſome others, are of a quite different nature: and even the quotation of St. *Paul*, in *Clement* of *Alexandria*, only informs us; that the Sibyl ſpake of one God, and of things which were to happen afterwards; without any expreſs mention of the Meſſiah. In anſwer to this query let us obſerve.

Firſt, We are inform'd by *Juſtin Martyr*, that the Sibyl foretold the coming of Jeſus Chriſt; and and ſpake of all thoſe things that were to be done

(*k*) Vide *Bevereg. Cod. Canon. vindicat. l.* 1. *c.* 14. *Sec.* 8. *Fabric. Biblioth. Græc. Tom.* 1. *l.* 1. *c.* 33. *Sec.* 11.

by

by him, σαφῶς, καὶ φανερῶς, *plainly and openly* (*l*). I know 'tis objected, that *Justin's* copy of the Sibyllin Oracles, was a corrupt piece of forgery. But how does that appear? Is there any necessity to take the words σαφῶς, καὶ φανερῶς, in such a latitude, as to make us believe, that in *Justin's* copy, the Messiah was describ'd with the same punctuality, and particularity, and all those circumstances relating to his actions and sufferings, as the author of our pseudo-Sibyllin Oracles describes him? If the ancient Sibyl said such things of a future Messiah, as were applicable to none but the person of the blessed Jesus, she describ'd him plainly, and openly. The quotations from the Sibyllin Oracles in *Justin*, have nothing in them, I will venture to affirm it, that looks modern, or suppositious. There the unity of the Godhead is asserted, and the idolatrous worship of the heathens is condemn'd: which is no more than has been done by *Orpheus*, *Sophocles*, *Plato*, and several more philosophers and poets, long before the coming of our Saviour (*m*). The book, wherein *Justin* speaks most fully and particularly of the Sibyllin Oracles, was probably one

(*l*) Σιβύλλη ——— περὶ δὲ τῆς τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ιησοῦ Χριστοῦ μελλούσης ἔσεσθαι παρουσίας, καὶ περὶ πάντων ἡμῖν ὧν αὐτὸς γίνεσθαι μελλόντων, σαφῶς, καὶ φανερῶς προαναφωνήσῃ. Cohortat. ad Græc.

(*m*) *Clem. Alex. Cohortat. ad Græc. p.* 62. 63. &c. Vide *Justin. Cohortat. ad Græc.*

of his first performances after his conversion, and consequently written, pretty near the beginning of the second century. Now since *Justin* appeals to the Sibyllin Oracles as very ancient; as very common in the world; and to be met with in all the parts of it. Since no forgery whilst new can pass for genuin, and a considerable time is previously necessary to establish its reputation: I think it is evident, that the copy of the Sibyllin Oracles, referr'd to by *Justin*, must be at least as old, as the Apostolick age. And whether it was then forg'd; in that purest and best age of Christianity, and even whilst the Apostles were living: or whether it be not very unfair, to entertain any suspicion of that kind, without any manner of evidence, I leave to the judgement of the candid, and impartial reader.

Secondly, the passage in *Clement* of *Alexandria*, cited from St. *Paul*, evidently implies, that the Sibyl foretold the coming of our Saviour: and if we cou'd but prove the passage to be genuine, it wou'd afford us a decisive argument, and be a direct, and full answer to the query propos'd. Take and read *Hystaspes* (says the author of that passage) and you'll find the son of God describ'd, πολλῷ τηλαυγέστερον ἢ σαφέστερον, that is much more manifestly and plainly, than Sibyl has done it: which necessarily implies that Sibyl had describ'd the son of God, tho' not in such express terms, as *Hystaspes*. When therefore it is said of Sibyl,

ἥλοῦ

Σιβυλλοΐ —— τὰ μέλλοντα ἔσεσθαι, *she declares things which are to come*, the meaning is, she speaks of a future Messiah (*n*).

Thirdly, There was a general expectation of the Messiah, for some time before he came, which was founded on some ancient Oracles, or prophecies. What made the Jews engage in a war with the Romans, that prov'd their utter ruin, was, as *Josephus* (*o*) informs us, an ambiguous Oracle, concerning a king that was to arise out of *Judæa*, who was to be the governour of the whole world. Nor was the expectation of a great and mighty king, peculiar to the Jews. *Suetonius* tells us, *An ancient, and constant Opinion had passed currently all over the east; that the fates had decreed, that about that time, there shou'd arise out of Judæa, those who shou'd have the government of the world* (*p*). *Tacitus* says, *Many were firmly persuaded, that it was contain'd in the ancient sacerdotal books, that about that time the east should prevail, and that some shou'd arise out of Judæa, who shou'd have the government of the world* (*q*).

It is generally suppos'd, that this notion of a Messiah, or king of the Jews, who was to have

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(*n*) *Clem. Alex. Strom. 6. c. 5.*
(*o*) *De Bello Jud. l. 7. c. 31.* Vide *Sueton. in Vespas. c. 4.*
(*p*) Ibid.
(*q*) *Histor. l. 5.*

the

the empire of the world, was deriv'd from the Jewiſh prophecies; becauſe the Jews were diſpers'd all over the eaſtern countries; were very induſtrious in gaining of proſelytes, and talk'd very much (as it is reaſonable to imagine) of their prophetick predictions, concerning the advent of their glorious king, the Meſſiah. But ſince the Jews commonly appear'd odious, ſilly, and contemptible creatures to the Gentiles, amongſt whom they liv'd; becauſe they profeſs'd a quite different religion, and *deny'd thoſe to be Gods, whom all Aſia, and the world worſhipp'd*: we cannot fairly ſuppoſe, that the Gentiles ſhou'd give much credit to any Jewiſh prophecies; and conſequently that expectation of a mighty king of Judæa, which prevail'd all over the eaſt, muſt have ſome other foundation, beſides the Jewiſh prophecies.

The *Magi*, or wiſe men, came from the eaſt to worſhip our Saviour, as ſoon as he was born: but what was it that gave them information of his nativity? why ſhou'd they conclude from the appearance of an unuſual ſtar, that the king of the Jews was born? In the prophetick writings in the Old Teſtament, we find no account of that ſurprizing Phænomenon, that accompanied our Lord's nativity: nor was there any thing of this nature in the Jewiſh prophecies, at the time when the ſon of God was incarnate: for, if any of the prophets had foretold the appearance of an extraordinary ſtar, which was to point out, and hang over

over the place of our Lord's nativity; the Jews must certainly have accompanied the wise men to *Bethlehem*, and wou'd themselves have ador'd their infant King, and Saviour. Some of the ancients were of opinion (*r*), that the *Magi* understood the meaning of the Star's appearance, by the assistance of *Balaam*'s prophecy; where it is said, *There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall arise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab*, &c (*s*). But this is undoubtedly a mistake; for the words do not speak of a star, but of some eminent, and illustrious person, that was to spring from the loyns of Jacob. The wise men were warn'd of God in a Dream, that they shou'd not return to *Herod*: and perhaps it was by some such divine revelation, that they became acquainted with the birth of the Messiah: however it is evident, that those eastern *Magi* had some knowledge of the Messiah, or king of the Jews, that was not borrow'd from the prophetick writings amongst the Jews.

The Gentiles had prophets of their own, as *Clement* of *Alexandria* observes, who deliver'd many things of great importance, that were consistent with truth, and divine revelation. Since our blessed Lord was to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of the people of

(*r*) Vide *Iren. l.* 3. *c.* 9. *Tertul. adv. Marc. c.* 28.
(*s*) *Numb.* 24. 17.

Israel,

Iſrael, it pleaſed Almighty God to give the Gentiles ſome previous notices of a Meſſiah; and frequently made the very enemies of his truth, the inſtruments of its propagation. *Balaam*, a diviner or ſoothſayer, and not a prophet of the Lord (*t*), foretold the coming of the Meſſiah. The devils themſelves confeſs'd *that Jeſus was the Son of God moſt high* (*u*). The Oracles of the devil were ſometimes compell'd to bear teſtimony to the truth. *Juſtin Martyr* tells us, when one went to the Oracle, and enquir'd who were the moſt pious and religious men. He receiv'd for anſwer, the Hebrews; who worſhip God, the ſelf exiſtent King (*w*). *Porphyry* alſo cites ſome Oracles, that mightily extol the Hebrews, for their wiſdom, and knowledge of religion (*x*). The Oracle of *Apollo* confeſs'd, as we learn from *Porphyry*, that the God of Iſrael was the true God (*y*). We are inform'd by the ſame author, and ſeveral others, that many of thoſe Oracles ſpake highly in commendation of our Saviour, and acknowledg'd him to be the Son of God (*z*). From theſe and ſuch like oracular reſponſes, as well as from ſome

(*t*) Vide *Origen. Homil.* 30. *in Num.*
(*u*) *Luke* 8. 28. *Mark* 5. 7.
(*w*) *Cohortat. ad Græcos.*
(*x*) *Euſeb. præparat. Evangel. l.* 9. *c.* 10.
(*y*) Ibid.
(*z*) *Euſeb. Demonſtrat. l.* 3. *c.* 6. *Auguſtin. de Civit. Dei. l.* 19. *c.* 23. *Niceph. Hiſt. l.* 1.

of

of the moſt ancient poets, and philoſophers, many of thoſe pretended Sibyllin Oracles have been borrow'd, that we meet with in our preſent collection.

What thoſe Sibyllin Oracles were, that were purchas'd by *Tarquin*, or whence they came, we cannot tell. In this however we are certain; that they were of a quite different ſtamp from ours: and were calculated, as far as it appears, merely to ſerve the intereſt of heatheniſh ſuperſtition, and idolatry. About fourſcore years before the birth of our Saviour, thoſe ancient Oracles were burnt with the *Capitol*, where they were depoſited: and the Roman ſenate, in order to repair the loſs, ſent Embaſſadours to *Samos*, *Ilium*, *Erythræ*, &c. *(a)*; who return'd to Rome, with a new collection of Sibyllin Oracles. This collection was mightily increas'd in *Auguſtus*'s time; who ordered a great many volumes of Oracles to the flames; and at the ſame time commanded, that all the Sibyllin Oracles that were then in private hands, ſhou'd be brought into the city *Prætor* under pain of death *(b)*. But this was a command of little ſignificancy. There were ſo many copies of thoſe Sibyllin Oracles, and diſpers'd in ſo many parts of the world; that it was an abſolute impoſſibility to recover them all.

(a) Tacit. Annal. l. 6.
(b) Tacit. Annal. l. 6. Juſtin. Mart. Apol. 2.

Beſides

Beſides thoſe that had them in their own poſſeſſion, were deſirous of keeping them: and ſince it was an eaſy matter to conceal them, they run little or no hazard by tranſgreſſing of *Cæſar*'s commands. They afterwards fell into the hands of the Chriſtians, who many times appeal'd to them in their diſputes with the heathens; and ſucceſfully urg'd their authority, in behalf of the Chriſtian Religion.

The fourth eclogue of *Virgil* is ſuppos'd to contain a deſcription of the Meſſiah, and of the happineſs and proſperity of his kingdom, taken from the Sibyllin Oracles. This appears to be the more probable, ſince that eclogue was written at a time, when there were a great many copies of Sibyllin Oracles carried to Rome; which *Virgil* might have the opportunity of peruſing, at leaſt before they were examin'd, and committed to the cuſtody of the *Quindecemviri*. There are ſome, I know, who underſtand by the *Cumæum carmen*, mention'd by *Virgil*, not the verſes of the Sibyl of *Cuma*, but *Heſiod*'s Golden age: but this interpretation is forc'd, and unnatural; and has nothing but bare conjecture to ſupport it. The poet in that eclogue, has a deſign to paint the glories of *Auguſtus*'s reign, and to compliment *Pollio* upon the birth of a ſon: but he builds upon the plan of the *Cumæan verſe*; and let his intentions be what they wou'd, his account of the birth of a great perſon, and of the happy times that were to enſue,

enſue, is much more applicable to the Meſſiah, than to *Pollio's* ſon, or any one elſe.

As to the Sibyllin Oracles being corrupted and interpolated by ſome Chriſtians, I own the charge to be true: but I ſpeak this only with regard to the collection now extant. For that the Sibyllin Oracles were interpolated by the Chriſtians, ſo early as *Celſus's* time reſts entirely upon his ſingle evidence. But he has been ſo often convicted of falſity; and has diſcover'd ſo much virulent malice and prejudice againſt the Chriſtians, that very little, or no regard is to be paid to what he aſſerts. Beſides he does not deſcend to particulars; nor tell us of what kind thoſe interpolations were. He ſays the Chriſtians had inſerted πολλὰ καὶ βλάσφημα, *many and blaſphemous things*. His meaning is perhaps, that the Sibyllin Oracles appeal'd to by the Chriſtians, ſpake irreverently, and diſreſpectfully of the heathen Gods, and deny'd their reality, or exiſtence: but if this be the ſole foundation of the charge, he might have carried it a great deal further; and have tax'd the primitive Chriſtians with interpolating the writings, of ſome of the moſt ancient poets, and philoſophers.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

The charge of worſhipping a Croſs accounted for.

SINCE there is no manner of difficulty in accounting for the remaining Calumnies, I ſhall but juſt mention the original cauſes of them, before I diſmiſs my reader.

The primitive Chriſtians were accus'd of worſhipping a Croſs, becauſe they frequently made uſe of the ſign of the Croſs. Wherever they were, or whatever buſineſs they were about, they made the ſign of the Croſs upon their foreheads (*a*). The *Signaculum Crucis* was to them, a memorial of their bleſſed Saviour's ſufferings, and a badge of their Chriſtian profeſſion. Beſides, they found by experience, that unclean Spirits were caſt out not only by the invocation of the holy name of Jeſus, but by the ſign of his paſſion (*b*). They alſo obſerv'd, that if a Chriſtian happen'd to be preſent at the heathen ſacrifices, and ſign'd him-

(*a*) *Tertul. de Corona Mil. c.* 3.
(*b*) *Lactant. l.* 4. *c.* 27.

ſelf

ſelf with the ſign of the Croſs, tho' never ſo privately; the ſouthſayers or diviners cou'd make no diſcovery, by looking into the entrails of beaſts (*c*). For theſe reaſons, the primitive Chriſtians not only made uſe of the ſign of the Croſs, but alſo had an honourable, and reverential eſteem for it. But to ſay that they paid adoration to a Croſs, is a baſe calumny; and contrary to the expreſs declarations of the primitive Chriſtians (*d*).

Tertullian has aſſign'd the reaſons (*e*), why the Chriſtians were charg'd with worſhipping the Sun. *viz.* their turning their faces towards the Eaſt in time of prayer (which was a very ancient, and early uſage amongſt the Chriſtians) and their keeping their weekly feſtival upon the *dies Solis*, or Sunday.

The Chriſtians were ſaid to be the cauſe of all the ſignal calamities that befel mankind, *Firſt*, becauſe the heathens took them to be a moſt prophane, irreligious, and atheiſtical ſet of people. They thought their gods wou'd never ſuffer ſuch capital wickedneſs to eſcape with impunity; but muſt pour down their hotteſt vengeance upon the world, for ſuffering ſuch execrable monſters to live in it. Hence whenever there happen'd a peſtilence,

(*c*) Ibid. *de Morte Perſecutor. c.* 10.
(*d*) Cruces etiam nec colimus, nec optamus. *Min. Fel. p.* 284.
(*e*) *Tertul. Apol. c.* 16.

a famine, a deluge of waters, or any other extraordinary, and publick calamity, immediately it was the common cry, *Christianos ad Leones. Drag the Christians away to the Lyons.* Some of the Christian writers substantially prov'd (*f*), that the world was visited with as severe calamities, before the coming of our Saviour, as it was afterwards: but this was little credited, since the humour then prevail'd, as indeed it has done at all times, of extolling the happiness, and prosperity of past ages, and magnifying them beyond the present. Besides, *Secondly*, This charge was urg'd with the greater vehemence, because the infidels found their account in it. It gave them an opportunity of plundering, and destroying those whom they hated. Proclaim a man an enemy to mankind, and you take away all tenderness, and pity towards him, and have it in your power, to sacrifice him when you please.

As to the charge of an unsociable reservedness and taciturnity, it had this foundation. The Christians cou'd not with a safe conscience keep up an intimate acquaintance, and familiarity with the infidels, who were wholely given up to the grossest idolatry. Nor could they cultivate an open familiarity, without exposing themselves to

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(*f*) Vide *Oros. contra Pagan.*

many

many dangers, and temporal inconveniencies. This made them ſhun ſociety, and chooſe a melancholy retirement: and tho' this was done for the preſervation of their innocence, and the ſecurity of their lives, and fortunes; yet their enemies imputed it to ill nature and moroſeneſs, and a hatred towards mankind.

That abominable and beaſtly charge of worſhipping the Genitals of the prieſts, was evidently occaſion'd thus. The Penitents, before they were re-admitted into the Church, us'd to kneel down before the prieſt *(g)*; and with hearty humiliation and ſorrow, confeſs their faults, and earneſtly beg, that they might be no longer excluded from the ſociety of the faithful. This had been obſerv'd by ſome wicked and malicious heathens; who took hold of the remoteſt hints, and the ſlighteſt appearances, in order to abuſe, and calumniate the innocent Chriſtians.

Laſtly. The charge of obſtinacy, and deſperation, madneſs, and folly, was deriv'd from that invincible courage, and patience of the Chriſtians, under all their ſufferings, and perſecutions for righteouſneſs ſake. To ſuffer the greateſt torments, and even death it ſelf, not only with patience, but with pleaſure; when they might have

(g) Vide *Tertul. de Pœnitent. c.* 9.

liv'd at ease, and enjoy'd all the comforts and conveniencies of life, was, in the opinion of the heathens, the effect of some incurable phrenzy, and unaccountable infatuation.

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